

# **TITLE PAGE**

UNIVERSITY OF STELLENBOSCH

THE CONSTRUCTION OF INTIMACY IN HETEROSEXUAL, LONGTERM  
RELATIONSHIPS IN A SOUTH AFRICAN FARMWORKER COMMUNITY



Dissertation presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of  
Psychology, Faculty of Arts and Social Science, at the University of Stellenbosch

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December 2014

## **DECLARATION/STATEMENT**

By submitting this dissertation, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own original work, that I am the sole author thereof, that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third party rights and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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**ABSTRACT**

Current mainstream theories of intimacy were derived from studies with primarily White, middle class participants living in developed countries. However, as social contexts shape people's definitions, meanings and behaviours, it cannot be assumed that mainstream intimacy conceptualisations would apply to other populations. Studies of intimacy should be located in its social and historical context. Previous South African studies of Black and Coloured couples mainly emphasised HIV/Aids, interpartner violence and gender inequality, and neglected to investigate positive aspects of intimate lives of poorer communities. A lack of such context-specific data on how South African men and women construct and experience intimate relationships hinders appropriate and effective interventions. This study addressed this research gap by exploring intimacy experiences of long-term heterosexual adult Coloured couples living in a low-income semi-rural community. The objective of this qualitative study was to gain an understanding of how the participant couples expressed and experienced intimacy. The participants were 15 couples (i.e. 30 participants), between the ages of 23 and 66 years, who had been married or living together for a minimum period of two years. Qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore: (i) how couples understand intimacy, and (ii) how intimacy is expressed and experienced in committed adult heterosexual relationships. Theoretically, this study was informed by social constructionism and interviews were analysed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis method. The following themes were identified: (i) closeness means being together, (ii) sex and intimacy (iii) closeness in talking (iv) expressions and experiences of intimacy/closeness through acts of care, (v) alcohol disrupts closeness (vi) family of origin and the constructions of intimacy; and (vii) community constructions and norms.

Although much of the international literature suggests that mutual self-disclosure is the foundation for intimacy, self-disclosure did not feature prominently in the narratives of this study's narratives. Closeness was expressed through sharing in practical and tangible ways. Gender was pertinent to these couples' experiences and gender roles were fundamental to their intimacy perceptions and behaviours. Despite some contestations of hegemonic masculinity and femininity constructions, most of the participants did not demonstrate an

active awareness or resistance regarding learned gender roles. They did not seem to consider these gender roles as problematic, limited or limiting, nor did they indicate alternative gender ideas. This was attributed partly to poverty and low education levels, which constrain people's access to alternative gender perspectives. Religion and community influences also play an important role in their understanding of their role as partner. Although Christianity endorses traditional gender ideas, the participants themselves felt that their religious beliefs and practices facilitated intimate experiences, and prevented alcohol abuse and domestic violence. In conclusion, implications for policy and practice in terms of gender inequality and alcohol abuse are discussed, as are the limitations of the study.

## OPSOMMING

Huidige hoofstroom teorieë van intimiteit is afgelei van studies met hoofsaaklik Wit, middelklas-deelnemers. Aangesien sosiale konteks mense se definisies, betekenis en gedrag met betrekking tot intimiteit vorm, kan dit egter nie aanvaar word dat die hoofstroom konseptualisering van intimiteit ook van toepassing sal wees op ander bevolkingsgroepe nie. Studies van intimiteit moet geleë wees in die sosiale en historiese konteks. 'n Gebrek aan sodanige konteks-spesifieke data oor hoe verskillende groepe Suid-Afrikaanse mans en vroue intieme verhoudings verstaan en beleef, kan toepaslike en effektiewe verhouding ingrypings belemmer. Verder het vorige Suid-Afrikaanse studies oor Swart en Kleurling paartjies hoofsaaklik gefokus op HIV/VIGS, paartjie geweld en geslags ongelykhede en het nagelaat om positiewe aspekte van die intieme lewe van paartjies in arm gemeenskappe te ondersoek. Hierdie studie het hierdie navorsing leemte aangespreek deur te verken hoe hoe langtermyn, heteroseksuele, volwasse paartjies in 'n lae-inkomste semi-landelike gemeenskap intimiteit verstaan, beleef en uitdruk.

Die deelnemers was 15 paartjies (d.w.s 30 deelnemers), tussen die ouderdomme van 23 en 66 jaar, wat getroud was of saamgewoon het vir 'n tydperk van ten minste twee jaar. Kwalitatiewe semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude is gevoer om die volgende te verken: (i) hoe paartjies intimiteit verstaan, en (ii) hoe intimiteit betoon en ervaar word in toegewyde volwasse heteroseksuele verhoudings. Die studie is teoreties geskoei op sosiale konstruktivisme en onderhoude is ontleed met behulp van Braun en Clarke se tematiese analise metode. Die volgende temas is geïdentifiseer uit die onderhoude: (i) nabyheid beteken om saam te wees, (ii) seks en intimiteit, (iii) nabyheid deur gesels, (iv) uitdrukkings en ervarings van intimiteit deur daad van sorg, (v) alkohol ontwig saamwees, (vi) die invloed van die familie van oorsprong op die konstruksie van intimiteit, (vii) gemeenskap konstruksies en norme.

Alhoewel die internasionale literatuur aandui dat wedersydse selfonthulling die grondslag vir intimiteit vorm, het self-onthulling nie prominent in die deelnemers se vertellings voorgekom nie. Nabyheid is eerder beleef en betoon deur praktiese en tasbare daade en gebare. Geslagsrolle was fundamenteel in paartjies se belewing en uitvoering van intimiteit. Ten spyte daarvan dat sommige individuele deelnemers hegemoniese geslagsrolle bevraagteken het, het die meerderheid deelnemers nie 'n aktiewe bewustheid of weerstand getoon rakende geleerde geslagsrolle nie. Hulle het skynbaar nie hierdie geslagsrolle as problematies, of beperkend gesien nie. Hulle het ook nie aangedui dat hulle alternatiewe geslagsrolle idees het nie. Dit word gedeeltelik toegeskryf aan armoede en lae vlakke van onderrig wat mense se toegang tot alternatiewe geslagsrolle en perspektiewe beperk. Godsdienste en gemeenskap invloede speel ook 'n belangrike rol in hul begrip van hul rol as lewensmaat. Alhoewel Christenskap tradisionele geslag idees onderskryf, het die deelnemers gevoel dat hulle godsdienstige oortuigings en praktyke intieme ervarings fasiliteer, asook die misbruik van alkohol en huishoudelike geweld verhoed. Dit impliseer dat godsdienste bydra by tot die skepping en instandhouding van manlikheid en vroulikheid idees in hierdie gemeenskap. Ten slotte, is implikasies vir beleid en praktyk in terme van geslagsongelykheid en alkoholisering bespreek, asook die beperkinge van die studie.

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## **DEDICATION**

Dedicated to my sons, Lydon and Joshwin Kleinhans, who have always believed in me. I hope that this part of my life will be an inspiration to you, to hold fast to your dreams, but importantly, when you experience challenges in your life, remember to act as if it is impossible to fail!

I look forward to having endless discussions with you about your own relationships and I hope that my research will help you attain the intimate relationship that will bring you much happiness and joy.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

FIS	Fear of Intimacy Scale
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
IPV	Inter Partner Violence
MRC	Medical Research Council
<i>n</i>	Sample Size
PAIR	Personal Assessment of Intimacy in Relationships
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
SC	Social Constructionist
SES	Socio-Economic Status
WHO	World Health Organisation



## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION AND MOTIVATION**

#### **1.1 Organisation of Dissertation**

This dissertation opens with Chapter 1, in which the introduction and motivation for the research is presented. In Chapter 2, social constructionism is presented as the main theoretical departure point. Chapter 3 reviews theoretical perspectives relevant to intimacy and research on intimacy conducted both internationally and within the South African context. In chapter 4, a closer view is presented of the community and social context in which the study participants lived. Research objectives, -method, -procedure and a summary of the demographic questionnaire are outlined in Chapter 5, while chapter 6 focuses on the results and findings. Finally, in Chapter 7, I explore the limitations and strengths of the present study, draw conclusions from the research findings and provide recommendations for future research.

#### **1.2 Introduction and Motivation**

Over the last three decades of research, intimacy has been regarded as an important aspect of adult personal relationships (Abbey, 2004). Human beings are seen as needing to establish and maintain intimate attachments and connections with significant others (Bowlby, 1969, 1980; Prager & Roberts, 2004). Research by the World Health Organisation [WHO] (2006) has also found evidence that the degree of intimacy that the individual experiences within an intimate relationship correlates with social, personal and physical health outcomes. People living in a satisfying intimate relationship are healthier than people living in a deprived intimate relationship (Hook, Gerstein, Deterich & Grindley, 2003; Yoon & Zinbarg, 2007). Marital satisfaction also often correlates with the degree of intimacy experienced by couples (Greeff & Malherbe, 2001; Patrick, Sells, Giordano

& Tollerud, 2007). Conversely, a lack of intimacy can be detrimental to individuals' well-being (Hook et al., 2003). According to Hook et al. (2003), several studies have concluded that a lack of intimacy is linked to mental disorders, such as depression. Low levels of intimacy are significantly linked to non-psychotic emotional illness (Hulson, 1992; Vincent, 1986).

Even though intimacy is regarded as an important human need and a vital component of intimate relationships, there is no consensus over the definition of intimacy (Gaia, 2002; Patrick & Beckenbach, 2009). According to Patrick and Beckenbach (2009), researchers have developed different definitions of intimacy and the examination of these different definitions reveals the disagreement that still exists about what intimacy actually is and how it manifests in adult intimate relationships. There seems to be awareness among researchers that intimacy is a concept that is difficult to define accurately (Mashek & Aron, 2004; Patrick & Beckenbach, 2009; Prager, 1995).

Many researchers (Laurenceau & Kleinman, 2005, 2006; Laurenceau, Rivera, Schaffer & Pietromonaco, 2004; Lippert & Prager, 2001;) propose that intimacy is a product of the interaction between relationship partners and have therefore investigated intimacy in the context of interpersonal processes. According to these researchers, self-disclosure and partner responsiveness correlate strongly with satisfying experiences of intimacy. Self-disclosure has been emphasised as a dominant pathway to intimacy in North American settings (Laurenceau & Kleinman, 2005). Prager and Roberts (2004) also highlight that many conceptualisations of intimacy focus on verbal exchanges, such as self-disclosure. Such conceptualisations of intimacy, however, are mostly based on research conducted in North American settings with student populations (Adams, Anderson & Adonu, 2004; Hook et al., 2003). These conceptualisations are therefore embedded in Western geographic, demographic, economic, social, historic and political realities, and may not apply across different social settings (Adams et al., 2004). Indeed, Adams et al. (2004) found that couples in West-African settings obtain relationship intimacy through fulfilling reciprocal relational obligations rather than through self-disclosure, as has often been found with couples in North American settings. The likelihood that intimacy may vary across social contexts should therefore be acknowledged.

According to Bazan (2007), many intimate relationship studies have focused on individual participants and have included more females than males, which provided a skewed male-female ratio (Bazan, 2007). Furthermore, few international and local studies have attempted to access both partners' perspectives and experiences in the relationship (Laurenceau & Kleinman, 2005). Numerous studies, for example, have been conducted on women and intimate partner violence (IPV) in South Africa (Abrahams, Hoffman, Jewkes, & Laubser, 2004), but few studies have accessed men's perspectives and experiences in the relationship. This is an important limitation in relationship research, and studies that include both partners are needed (Abrahams et al., 2003; Boonzaier & De La Rey, 2003).

A variety of studies fundamentally utilised self-reports of individuals (Abbey, 2004; Lippert & Prager, 2001) and quantitative research methods, such as questionnaires and surveys, for intimacy studies (Hook et al., 2003). Hook et al. (2003) question the validity of quantitative methods in measuring the main features of intimate interactions. Utilising quantitative methods also provides a narrow perspective on participants' experiences of intimacy as it may involve the researcher's perspective more than the participant's (Patrick & Beckenbach, 2009). In addition, social constructionism highlights the importance of studying phenomena through a lens that highlights the social nature of phenomena, and the influential and complex role of social context (Steenkamp, 2005). Quantitative measures are limited in the ability to offer insight into how the social context, norms and values of a specific community constitute an individual's meaning, experience and expression of intimacy (Brown Travis & White, 2000; Gaia, 2003). Qualitative research can thus be particularly useful in investigating socially constructed phenomena (Hammer, 2011).

Despite the important link between intimacy and the mental, psychological and emotional wellbeing of partners, limited research has been conducted on intimacy in South Africa. A literature review conducted by Conradie (2006) on South African intimate relationship research revealed that most studies that specifically focused on intimacy were conducted before the year 2000. The diverse South African population is also not well represented in South African intimate relationship research, as many studies used white, middle-class participants. Participants from lower socio-economic backgrounds, and/or living in semi-urban and rural communities are neglected in South

African intimate relationship studies (Conradie, 2006). In recent years, there has been an increased focus on sexual relationships in these communities due to the prevalence of HIV/Aids and interpartner violence in such communities. Literature of the last 15 years on intimate relationships in South Africa indicate that South African researchers strongly emphasised the links between gender inequalities, HIV/Aids and interpartner violence in <sup>1</sup>Black and Coloured couple relationships. Blacks, Coloured and Whites are the racial categories created as part of apartheid in South Africa, and are still currently used to categorise South Africans.

The significance of such research investigations and results cannot be debated. However, more recently, it has been highlighted that such a focus is problematic as much of the research on Black and Coloured intimate heterosexual relationships, as noted, has been collected from unstable or problematic relationships characterised by HIV/Aids, interpartner violence and gender inequalities (Abrahams et al., 2006; Dunkle et al., 2004; Hunter, 2008; Jewkes, Levin & Penn-Kekana, 2003; Ragnarsson, Townsend, Thorson, Chopra & Ekström, 2009). These studies on HIV/Aids interpartner violence and gender inequalities could be argued to reproduce negative constructions of intimate and sexual relationships of Coloured heterosexual couples, and this has been noted with concern in South Africa (Ratele, Shefer & Clowes, 2012; Shefer, Shabala & Townsend, 2004). Furthermore, little attempt has been made to explore the positive experiences of intimacy in Black and Coloured heterosexual couples. Many studies neglect to consider the wide range of meanings attached to intimacy. In particular, the qualities and processes that may foster supportive and satisfying intimate relationships have been neglected.

Informed by the limitations in intimate relationship studies discussed above, this study aimed to generate community-specific knowledge about intimacy. Specifically, it explores understandings, expressions and experiences of intimacy in adult couples in committed relationships who live in one

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White, Black/African and Coloured are categories created by the apartheid government. Although the terms White, Black/African, and Coloured are products of the apartheid era, they also refer to demographic markers and do not signify inherent characteristics (Sawyer-Kurian, Wechsberg, & Luseno, 2010, p. 13).

low-income, semi-rural, Western Cape Coloured community. This study formed part of a larger on-going research project positioned within a broad social constructionist theoretical framework and explores how people construct intimate/close relationships in this specific research community. In the next chapter, I will present the theoretical conceptualisation of the present study.

## CHAPTER 2

### CONCEPTUALISATION AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter, I will present social constructionism as a theoretical departure point for this study.

#### 2.1 Social Constructionism as a Broad Theoretical Departure Point

Intimacy researchers (e.g. Adams et al., 2004) emphasise that definitions of intimacy may vary across social contexts and that intimacy is “grounded in particular cultural worlds” (p. 321). This notion is central to social constructionist thought, which serves as a theoretical departure point for this study. Social constructionism is a perspective that developed from intellectual traditions including sociology, social philosophy and sociology of knowledge. Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann are often cited as the originators of social constructionism (Cunliffe, 2008). Cunliffe (2008) describes social constructionism as rooted in the idea that social reality is not detached from us, but that we and our social realities are intimately and unquestionably intertwined, as each contours and is contoured by the other in everyday interactions. In other words: “the ways we understand the world are products of the communities, cultures, and historical moments of which we are a part” (Dean, 2011, p. 77). Social constructionists argue that the people we are, and the world we experience, are predominantly the product of social processes. This implies that neither individual consciousness nor a higher being such as God, but instead society itself, is the primary agent and the source of experience (Cromby & Nightingale, 1999; Nightingale & Cromby, 2002).

Social constructionism rejects the essentialist philosophy that social phenomena are unescapably universal, and biologically controlled (Dean, 2011; Durrheim, 1997; Simon, 1996). Instead, social constructionism advocates that humans are biological beings, born into a social world and that biological and social factors cannot be considered separately. Social, political environments interact with the biologically developing organism to socially construct reality (Durrheim, 1997; Simon, 1996). Rothbaum, Weisz, Pott, Miyake, & Morelli. (2000) further point out that traditional

biological perspectives take no account of the social variation between cultures. Social constructionism proposes that it is impossible for one authentic world to be represented, because each individual experiences a different world from the next person (Durrheim, 1997; Simon, 1996). Witkin (2012) therefore says that the most central idea of social constructionism is that humans construct their own world.

The social constructionist perspective also stands somewhat in contrast to Western values of individualism and independence (Rudes & Guterman, 2007). According to Lips (2006), the way we construct our worlds is linked to the concept of self. Lips (2006) advocates that the self is socially constructed, and that people of different cultures have remarkably different versions of the self. In Westernised and North American settings, the self is rooted in individualist, atomistic or independent constructions of the self, whilst in other settings it is entrenched in a relational self or relational individualism (Adams et al., 2004; Lips, 2006). In the latter, the self is interdependent and for this reason intimacy is inescapably linked to other people, the place they live in, and spiritual dynamics (Adams et al., 2004).

According to social constructionist thought, the role of language and the influence of language in creating a social reality are different from the traditional notion that language is a medium of communication alone (Durrheim, 1997). Instead, social constructionism aims to demonstrate that language has a performative nature and the ability to actively produce social reality (Kiguwa, 2006) and meaning (Dean, 2011). According to Kiguwa (2006), we interpret our environment through language, and the world we are born into is created by language. Language also represents people's social values. Our identity is strongly linked to the language we speak and it is used to express ourselves within a specific environment (Mukhuba, 2005). Language and meaning play a crucial role in knowledge construction, how people interpret and express new experiences, and make sense of the world or community in which they live (Mukhuba, 2005). According to Gergen (2009), we rely on language to communicate with others, collaborate and interact with others in the most fulfilling and nurturing way (Gergen, 2009).

In line with these ideas, Beall and Sternberg (1995) propose a social constructionist theory of love in which they emphasise that definitions and experiences of love may vary over different cultural contexts. Sternberg (1998) advocates that people's concept of intimacy and love develops as they encounter different stories of love. From these stories, they create their own meaning about intimacy and love.

According to Sternberg (1998):

*“All of us are exposed to many different stories about love. They reach us through our own experience, as well as through literature, the media, and so forth. [...] Under the spell of the stories we absorb, we gradually form our own personal stories about love - models of how love is “supposed” to work. How we develop our own stories and what they turn out to be depends on our personality and our environment, but once we have a story - or, like many of us, a set of stories - we seek to live it out in reality.” (p. 4)*

Adams et al. (2004) remind us that current notions of intimacy in close interpersonal relationships do not refer to a natural or inevitable phenomenon. These authors argue that it is a recent development associated with the rise of affective individualism. Affective individualism emphasises the exploration and expression of the individual's unique feelings, and that close relationships are important contexts in which to explore and express personal feelings (Adams et al., 2004). The concept of affective individualism emerged with the social changes in North America and Europe in the 1800s. Before then, marriage and family life was characterised by “distance, deference and patriarchy” and relationship satisfaction was the result of the successful performance of gender relational obligations and less about emotional closeness and intimacy (Adams et al., 2004, p. 231).

Besides changes over time, Adams et al. (2004) also highlight that constructions of intimacy vary across social contexts that exist in the same period. These authors specifically refer to West African settings where the practice of arranged marriages influences constructions of intimacy. Rather than an agreement between individuals, marriage is an arrangement between families. In the West



African social context, intimacy is not seen as a prerequisite for a healthy marriage, nor is self-disclosure seen as a desirable component of intimacy, as in North American settings.

Given the social constructionist assumption that the individual is intimately embedded within the social, historic and cultural forces which surround him/her, researching persons separate from their situations and interactions is inappropriate (Adams et al., 2004; Puig, Koro-Ljungberg & Echevarria-Doan, 2008). It requires that researchers be cognisant that any analysis is situated in a particular setting, place, time and culture (Charmaz, 2006). Social constructionists see the researcher's role as that of an architect interested both in how knowledge is created about the world, and from which cultural resources and materials such knowledge is created (Thompson & Harper, 2012).

According to Bryant and Charmaz (2007), social constructionist thought emphasises how methodological strategies and data analysis are constructed, and that researchers should be cognisant of the research context and their preferences, perspectives, positions and interactions. Charmaz (2006) urges researchers utilising a constructionist approach to become conscious of their own situations, biases and inclinations, and argues that researchers need to realise how they may influence research findings. Puig et al. (2008) advocate that it is the researcher's moral obligation to recognise and acknowledge constructions of reality and meaning as unique to each individual's experience and to respect the actor's truth as real, although relative.

The development of the social constructionist perspective in the 1960s has certainly influenced the psychology discipline (Rudes & Guterman, 2007). According to Cromby and Nightingale (1999), social constructionism advanced social explanations for an increasing assortment of phenomena, such as attitudes, emotions, personality, memory and the self. Social constructionists characteristically use discourse and conversation analysis, Q-sorts and ethnography, and these methods are becoming increasingly appropriate to mainstream psychologists and are also customary in university undergraduate courses. Social constructionist ideology is applied in practices such as

counseling and therapy, educational, developmental and health, psychology (Cromby & Nightingale 1999; Hansen, 2010).

Instead of seeing the discipline as a science that discovers and describes real things (such as insanity, the mind and emotions), social constructionist psychologists understand psychological knowledge to be constructed within certain specific cultural, historical and political contexts (Durrheim, 1997). According to Steenkamp (2005), the rise of social constructionism in psychology has allowed researchers and theorists to study phenomena through a lens that highlights the social nature of phenomena, and the influential and complex role of social context. Qualitative research is seen by social constructionists as a particularly useful means to investigate socially constructed phenomena (Hammer, 2011). More importantly, social constructionism has broadened research prospects, shifting the focus from the essentialised, intra-psychic level to the production of intimacy in a complex milieu of interpersonal conditions and circumstances (Steenkamp, 2005).

### **2.1.1 Critique of social constructionism**

Although social constructionism has many supporters, it has also been met with resistance and criticism (Hansen, 2010; Witkin, 2012). Cromby and Nightingale (1999) point out that although there are many points of consensus between social constructionists, there are also significant disagreements regarding the limits of what is socially constructed and the relative contribution of extra-discursive processes. Recently, questions about what is real, and what is relative, and the numerous answers to these questions, have resulted in the realism-relativism debate (Cromby & Nightingale 1999; Nightingale & Cromby, 2002).

According to Cromby and Nightingale (1999), realism is the dogma that an exterior world exists that is independent of our perceptions. In this case, perceptions refer to our thoughts, language, desires and beliefs, and thus encompass all the ways in which we could experience and know the world and ourselves. Relativism rebuts this dogma and advocates that because any exterior world is

inaccessible to us in both practice and principle, it must not be presumed or pondered upon (Cromby & Nightingale, 1999). At first glance, it may appear that social constructionism is inherently and exclusively relativist. Edwards, Ashmore and Potter (1995) unequivocally argue for relativism in social constructionist thought, and advocate that relativism is the only suitable base for investigation in the social or human sciences.

However, the history of critical thought reveals that realism and relativism are both strategically organised (Cromby & Nightingale, 1999), according to which aspects of the world are to be “relativised” and which are to be “real-ised”, and that this is a choice typically shaped by moral, political or pragmatic” principles (Cromby & Nightingale, 1999, p. 9). According to Cromby and Nightingale (1999), social constructions surround us and encompass countless elements, such as people, racism, marriages, disease, crime, legislative policies, governments and even social constructionist psychology, but that none of these aspects are any less real.

Cromby and Nightingale (1999) highlight three issues which social constructionists are unable to resolve in the realism-relativism debate. Firstly, it is the issue of embodiment. These authors argue that social constructionism has the tendency to disregard the body whilst concurrently trying to address it by postulating comprehensive analysis of the discourses that concern the body (Cromby & Nightingale, 1999). Social constructionists may ignore the fact that talking is not the only form of interaction and may continually ignore the body or treat it as simple metaphor or text. In so doing, they obscure and downplay the significance of its functional, hormonal, anatomical, physiological and phenomenological aspects (Cromby & Nightingale, 1999). However, Gergen (2009) argues that social constructionists agree that the body exists, but raise the question: for what end or purpose? Gergen (2009) points out that the body has different meanings for different people, and is not just a lump of flesh with all its physiological functions. It is therefore also a social construction with many different meanings.

Secondly, Cromby and Nightingale (1999) raise the issue of materiality, which refers to the fundamental and material character of the world in which we live. This includes the physical

aspects of tables, rocks, rivers, mountains, oceans, planets etc. Materiality is the way in which supplies are disseminated, where bodies are located, how space is arranged and organised, and the irrevocable fact of time. Even though such things may appear in discourse, they are not diminished or the same as discourse (Cromby & Nightingale, 1999). Cromby and Nightingale (1999) argue that materiality is of importance, as it creates both constraints and opportunities by which and through which we live our lives. To deny materiality makes social constructionism appear unimpressive, and produces an unauthentic emphasis on the contextual or social (Cromby & Nightingale, 1999). Gergen's (2009) counterargument is that social constructionism does not deny that rocks, earth or pollution are real, but that we should be careful of what we consider to be real. To illustrate this point, Gergen (2009) eloquently makes the point that if science considers the rock to be solid, there is no reason to consider that it might consist of molecular particles. Once the perception existed that the earth was flat and if scientists had accepted this as a then obvious fact, others would not have explored the roundness of the earth (Gergen, 2009).

A third issue is that of power, which is also enfolded in confusion, with multiple and sometimes mutually exclusive definitions (Cromby & Nightingale, 1999). Cromby and Nightingale are of the opinion that social constructionism cannot include power because it does not sufficiently attend to embodiment and materiality and continues to assign subjectivity and personal-social history to its peripheries. Evidence of power relationships in daily life is evident in research on gender and race, and the effects of sexual and physical abuse on individuals (Cromby & Nightingale, 1999). According to Gergen (2009), however, social constructionism views power as essential to an understanding of subjectivity, because the personal-social histories from which it emerges are always moulded and shaped by power relationships. Gergen (2009) also emphasises that social constructionism welcomes critique as it prevents one particular viewpoint from becoming dogma. Dogma usually constrains further exploration and dialogue.

### **2.1.2 Conclusion**

The current study used social constructionism as a broad theoretical departure point and conceptualised intimacy as a social construction that is shaped by various factors and social contexts. The study specifically aimed to explore participants' experiences of intimacy, and utilised a descriptive thematic research method as it aims to capture and document the experiences of people, and therefore in challenging mainstream theories (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003). Similar to Eatough and Smith (2008), I therefore view intimacy as a social construction, but am more interested in how the construction is lived and experienced by a specific person. The thematic method and its underpinnings are presented more comprehensively in Chapter 5.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON INTIMACY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The construct intimacy has been researched extensively internationally and, in the last few decades, a large number of papers have been published on a wide variety of topics related to this phenomenon (Abbey, 2004; Bagarozzi, 2001; Laurenceau & Kleinman, 2005; Lippert & Prager, 2001; Prager & Roberts). A literature search for South African studies on intimacy, however, revealed that few studies have been conducted and published. My literature review will not attempt to review the immense and broad intimacy research area, but will focus on the concepts and themes that are particularly relevant to the current study. In this chapter, I will provide a review of current theoretical perspectives and conceptualisations of intimacy; as well as those themes most relevant to my study focus.

#### **3.2 Theoretical Perspectives Relevant to Intimacy**

Many different theories are relevant to a conceptualisation of intimacy. In the following pages, brief reviews of selected relevant theoretical perspectives that shed light on intimacy in adult love relationships are presented.

### **3.2.1 Freud's view on intimacy**

Freud made a valuable contribution to understanding how early childhood relationships may influence intimacy in adulthood (Waldinger, Seidman, Gerber, Joan, Liem, Allen & Hauser, 2003). Freud introduced the concept of transference in intimacy, and suggested that each person has a dominant relationship template, which is repeatedly re-copied during the individual's lifespan (Waldinger et al., 2003). According to Freud, new relationships are approached with these personal relationship templates, which consist of huge amounts of the unfulfilled wants, needs, desires and expectations left behind from the past and which were not successfully satisfied (Waldinger et al., 2003). This implies that experiences are transferred from earlier relationships to later ones. Freud's concept of transferences also draws our attention to the idea that our experiences are shaped by parental influences. However, Cassidy (2001) provide a more social constructionist perspective and postulates that it is not only parents who influences adult intimate behaviour, but that it is also shaped by our friends, peers, previous and current intimate partners. A limitation of Freud's theory of transference is that it ignores other social, and religious influences (Friedman & Schustack, 2014). Freud's theory was also highly biological and individualistic, and relatively unconscious of cultural variations as his theory implies that all intimate behaviour is universal and the same in different cultures and over different timeframes (Friedman & Schustack, 2014).

Freud also believes that males are the superior partner in relationship and that women's nature makes them inherently weak, submissive and inferior. Freud's psychoanalytic theory was disconcertingly male-centred (Friedman & Schustack, 2014), and it justified patriarchal intimate relationships. Early Feminist theorist such as Horney and others opposed Freud's patriarchal notions as it is believed to be oppressive towards women and female partners in general (Friedman & Schustack, 2014). Horney also strongly advocates that it is not women who are biologically weak or inferior to men, but that society, especially patriarchal societies, situates women in inferior positions in relationships (Friedman & Schustack, 2014). For this reason, social constructionists reject Freud's claims that behaviour is biological, natural, individualistic and universal, and instead propose that intimacy is socially constructed in various cultural settings.

### **3.2.2 Erikson's developmental view of intimacy**

According to Gaia (2002), the role of intimacy in relationships has been investigated since the early 1950s by psychologists such as Erikson, who was one of the early authors in this field. Erikson created an eight-stage theory of psychosocial development. Erikson viewed intimacy as the ability to commit oneself to existing partnerships and the moral control to abide by such commitments, even though sacrifices and compromises may be necessary. Erikson further argued that intimacy cannot be achieved outside the context of adult relationships (Gaia, 2002). He proposed that in the sixth stage (i.e. during adolescence) the individual must resolve the conflict of intimacy versus isolation and face the developmental task of forming intimate relationships with others (Gaia, 2002; Sneed, Whitbourne, Schwartz & Huang, 2012). During this stage, the adolescent struggles to expose and share his/her innermost self in order to unify his/her identity with others (Gaia, 2002).

According to Erikson, the individual's capacity for intimacy occurs in her/his middle twenties when a person establishes a stable identity and has the ability to reveal or disclose very personal information or details about him/herself (Laurenceau & Kleinman, 2005). According to Erikson (1950), intimacy formation is one of the most important stages of development, as the adolescent faces isolation in the form of self-absorption if he/she does not master this stage. The young adult who forms a healthy intimate relationship with another individual will achieve and maintain intimacy in adulthood. In support of Erikson, Sneed et al. (2012) also found that identity and intimacy are crucial psychosocial issues in emerging adulthood. Finally, Mackinnon, Nosko, Pratt, and Norris (2011) argue that the formation of intimate relationships with other people in young adulthood is an important precursor for later middle adulthood development.

The universal applicability of Erikson's theory however, has been questioned (Sneed et al., 2012) and as with Freud, social constructionist rejects this notion of universality. Buckler argues that this theory does not consider the role of gender on intimacy and that women's intimacy in a patriarchal society has not been fully examined (Buckler, 2005). Ochse and Plug (1986) conducted an earlier cross-cultural South African investigation to establish the validity of Erikson's theory of personality



development. They found that the identity crises of Black men and women and White men and women were resolved at different times to those indicated in Erickson's theory. Their study therefore suggests that Erickson's developmental theory does not apply across different gender and social groups.

### **3.2.3 Attachment theory and intimacy**

Following the pivotal work conducted by Hazan and Shaver attachment research has expanded to include a growing interest in studies focusing on attachment in adult intimate relationships (Caron, Lafontaine, Bureau, Levesque & Johnson, 2012; Schachner & Shaver, 2004). Over the last three decades, attachment theory has become prominent in explaining how the first relationships of the child correlate with intimacy in adult relationships (Brassard, Shaver & Lussier 2007; Caron et al., 2012; Gaia, 2003; Schaffer, 2005; Schachner & Shaver, 2004). According to attachment theory, the attachment system is functional over the entire lifespan and can be applied to understand how people experience and express intimacy in adult intimate relationships. Bowlby defined attachment as a lifelong psychological human connection, which ranges from birth to adulthood (Bowlby, 1969, 1980; Gaia, 2002). Fundamentally, attachment theory proposes that our earlier relationships impact on our adult relationships, and inhibit or expand our ability to form intimate relationships (Brassard, et al., 2007; Caron et al., 2012; Cassidy, 2001; Schachner & Shaver, 2004).

According to attachment theory, the individual develops internal working models of attachment relationships, based on repeated interactions with their caregivers. The internal working model includes beliefs of the love-ability of the self and the responsiveness of others (Waldinger et al., 2003). These internal working models guide expectations about relationships throughout the individual's lifespan. The ability to establish and maintain intimate relationships in adulthood is largely built on the foundation of a secure base with earlier attachment figures. In adult relationships, spouses or partners become the primary attachment figure for many adults and the primary sources from whom comfort and security is sought (Cassidy, 2001; Johnson, 2003).

Collins and Feeney (2004) argue that individuals have the capacity to let go of their attachment systems in order to activate a certain amount of proximity and closeness to new attachment figures. Insecurely attached individuals may not have the best attachment strategies, but are nevertheless able to develop strategies that are sufficient to maintain a certain degree of intimacy to new adult attachment figures (Collins & Feeney, 2004). Attachment strategies may also change as a result of new relationship experiences. Cassidy (2001) argues that it is not only the relationship with parents that shape realities, but that young adults learn much about relationships from their peers, friends, and experiences with former or current partners. This concurs with findings that attachment patterns to romantic partners tend to resemble those to friends, because friendships and intimate romantic relationships tend to be voluntary and egalitarian, whereas relationships with parents are mostly more unequal (Caron et al., 2012). For this reason it has been argued that adults' mental models of friendships and egalitarian partnerships may influence their expectations and attachments in intimate relationships more heavily than their relationships with parents (Brassard et al., 2007; Caron et al, 2012; Cassidy, 2001). This may also contribute to the way partners experience and express intimacy within the relationship (Brassard et al., 2007; Caron, et al, 2012; Cassidy, 2001; Schachner & Shaver, 2004).

Despite the widespread use of attachment theory to conceptualise intimate relationships, Rothbaum et al. (2000) question attachment theory's claims of validity across cultures. They argue that attachment theory is embedded in Western geographic, demographic, economic, social, historic and political realities. What may constitute sensitive, responsive caregiving in one culture is not necessarily the case in other cultures, and the development of attachment styles may vary from one society to another (Rothbaum et al., 2000).

### 3.2.4 Sternberg's triangular theory of love

According to Sternberg (1986), love consists of three interlinked components: (i) intimacy, (ii) passion and (iii) decision/commitment. The intimacy component refers to feelings of close connectedness or bondedness and includes emotions of warmth in a loving relationship. Intimacy may also refer to the “emotional investment in the relationship” (Sternberg, 1986, p. 119). According to Sternberg and Grajek (1984) and Sternberg (1986), the intimacy component is core to many intimate relationships. “Intimacy includes: (a) desire to promote the welfare of the loved one, (b) experienced happiness with the loved one, (c) high regard for the loved one, (d) being able to count on the loved one in times of need, (e) mutual understanding with the loved one, (f) sharing of one's self and one's possessions with the loved one, (g) receipt of emotional support from the loved one, (h) giving of emotional support to the loved one, (i) intimate communication with the loved one, and (j) valuing the loved one in one's life” (Sternberg 1986, p. 121).

Sternberg also acknowledges that intimacy is a complex phenomenon partly due to our biological disposition; genetic instincts and drives, but also largely due to the socially learned roles, which were observed and were modelled to us. However, this theory also seems to assume a Western-centric view of love and intimacy as Sternberg's theory does not incorporate alternative intimacy pathways to romantic love and intimacy. For example, in the Western world it is assumed that passion is a precondition for intimacy, love or marriage, but in cultures participating in arranged marriages love or intimacy tends to follow marriage and not precede it (Furphy, 2011) Sternberg's triangular theory of love also do not explain why people are able to fall in love or be able to maintain a loving relationship with one person but not another.

In later years, Sternberg (1998) did revise his original theory to address such limitations, and proposed his ‘story of love’ theory. His ‘story of love’ theory seeks to understand the key issue of the likelihood of some relationships to perform well, while others fall apart. Sternberg's (1998) theory of love proposes a social constructionist perspective, in which he emphasises that each person develops, within her/his specific social context, her/his own ‘story of love’. Sternberg (1998)

notes that we tend to fall in love with people whose stories are similar to our own, but whose roles in these stories are complementary to ours. The stories refer to the hopes, dreams, and ideas that each partner has developed in their minds about their ideal love story. Sternberg (1998) suggests that love is a conscious or unconscious constructed story, and these constructed love stories affect the ways in which people perform in their intimate relationships. His theory therefore acknowledges that people of different cultures and timeframes may have their own version of an ideal relationship.

### **3.2.5 Feminist theory and critical gender studies**

Feminist theory is a very prominent theory in explaining gender and gender relations in interpersonal relationships (Lips, 2006; Moi, 2010). As my study involves gender and gender relationships, it is therefore important to consider the contribution of feminist theory to this field.

In the past, psychological theories have tended to decontextualise gender and assumed essential biological differences between men and women. Feminism offers an alternative account of gender (Steenkamp, 2005). Central to feminist theory is the notion that gender is socially constructed for a specific purpose (Butler, 1990; Flax, 1990; Moi, 2010). Gender is an organising principle that profoundly shapes human lives (Butler, 1990; Lips, 2006;). Flax (1990) states that the most important advancement made by feminist theory and practices is that the existence of gender has been “problematized” (p. 21), in other words the traditional concept of gender is seen as problematic. Gender is viewed as fluid and not biologically determined (Flax, 1990; Gamble, 2004; Moi, 2012). Butler (1990) and Gamble (2004) advocates that gender constitutes a set of gestures which are performed upon the surface of the body.

Feminist theory also proposes that phenomena are gender and culturally bound (Brown Travis & White, 2000; Lips, 2006). In other words, gender relations are part of a particular culture and reflect a historical timeframe. Such gender relations differ in shape and form, according to the cultural context, and continuously transform with time (Lips, 2006). This is evident as different cultures

have different rules and expectations for femininity and masculinity (Lips, 2006). Thus, gender is not seen as: an essential, inborn characteristic, but rather as something constructed largely by people, and to which meaning is attached in a gendered and social context (Brown Travis & White, 2000; Lips, 2006; Moi, 2010). According to Lips (2006) “Gender is the term used to encompass the social expectations associated with femininity and masculinity” (p. 6).

According to Flax (2004), post-structuralist complexities of feminism are marked by numerous and differing concepts of feminism, but all challenge the uniformity or essentialist concepts of womanhood. Lips (2006) also argues that the experiences of women vary across cultures and societies and that the category of women is not homogenous.

Central to feminist research is the commitment to an egalitarian society and a focus on social justice to redress unjust social beliefs, attitudes and actions (Cruz, 2003). Feminist research is concerned with listening to marginalised people and creating awareness in the oppressed and the oppressor to the concealed realities of life (Cruz, 2003). The goal of feminism is to bring social change through changing the beliefs that perpetuate social injustices (Cruz, 2003). Feminists have a specific interest in problematising gender by emphasising power inequalities between men and women. According to Flax (1990; 1997), gender relations in society are relations of domination. Feminist theory suggests that societies are structured to privilege males. This patriarchy, with its dominant notions of masculinity and femininity, shapes individuals’ ideas of themselves (Lips, 2006). Feminist work has also documented the unequal burden women carry in this system of gender inequality in heterosexual relationships (Jamieson, 1999; Lips 2006). Feminism therefore highlights women’s needs, interests and experiences. It also aims to improve the lives of women and challenges patriarchal values that disadvantage women (Cruz, 2003; Lips, 2006).

Post-structuralist feminism opposes the idea that sex in relationships is merely a biological act between men and women. Post-structuralist feminism are particularly interested in explaining the relationship between nature and social norms, and in analysing the historic and social effects of sexual differences (Moi, 2010). According to Moi (2010), Judith Butler (1990) has produced the

most important work on sex and gender through her argument that sex and gender are socially constructed, and that gender constructions affect the sex constructions of women and men. Lips (2006) argues that men's economic and social power over women affects heterosexual relationships. Women are subject to a double standard of sexual conduct that favours men (Brown Travis & White, 2000; Lips, 2006).

Jamieson (1999) argues that the social changes that allow women more freedom to choose a life trajectory have led to increased individualisation and diversity in intimacy. According to Jamieson this transformation has resulted in what Giddens (1992) calls the rise of the "pure relationship", which is a relationship that partners choose for its own sake and maintain only as long as it satisfies all the needs of both parties. This proposed pure relationship as advocated by Giddens (1992) also emphasise the importance of self-disclosure. Jamieson (1999) argues that such a notion assumes and requires equality between relationship partners. However, Jamieson (1999) and Lips (2006) highlight that research points to gender inequality in intimate heterosexual relationships. According to Jamieson (1999), the ideal of self-disclosure and intimacy can hide inequalities in heterosexual relationships such as men generally having more power in the relationship than women, and men having more monetary and employment resources than women (Jamieson, 1999). Men still tend to control matters of importance, while women have control over the least important matters or none at all (Lips, 2006).

Furthermore, therapeutic strategies tend to individualise problems in relationships and ignore the sociological problems from which these stem. For example, many relationship therapists may help women deal with the distress, but often the distress is caused because women are overburdened with responsibilities such as cooking, cleaning, taking care of the household and the aging mother-in-law (Lips, 2006). Jamieson (1999) therefore argues that mainstream practices of heterosexual intimate relationships reinforce gender division instead of democratising it.

### 3.2.6 Men's studies and Critical Men's Studies

Levant (2011) is cognisant that feminist scholars have highlighted the gender divisions and inequalities in heterosexual relationships, and has challenged a male-centric perspective over the last 50 years. A strong case has been made for a more gender-specific approach, which created a new psychology of women (Levant, 2011). Levant also points out that in this spirit, men's studies scholars from psychology, sociology and anthropology began, 30 years ago, to examine masculinity not as the universal standard for human behaviour but rather as a complex and even problematic construct in intimate relationships (Levant, 2011).

Levant views masculinity and femininity as a social role shaped by stereotypes and norms and even as a social performance that could be enacted by inhabitants of male or female bodies (Butler, 1990; Levant, 2011; Lips, 2006). Gender as a social construction enables the questioning of traditional norms of masculinity within intimate relationships. It also problematizes phenomena like male dominance, aggression and restrictive emotionality in relationships. According to Levant (2011) these are unfortunate negative but predictable outcomes of male gender role socialisation processes which are informed by traditional masculinity ideologies. Levant (2011) believes that a new psychology of men might help men find solutions to the masculinity crisis and the crisis of intimate affective connection. He urges that solutions should enhance rather than inflame intimate relations (Levant, 2011). This implies that a more positive reconstruction of masculinities would result in more favourable outcomes such as valuing women in relationships and closer affective connections in intimate heterosexual relationships.

In contrast to Levant, Hearn (2004) questions the value of men's studies, and claims that such studies represent men in ways that do not problematise masculinities. At worst, Hearn (2004) argues that men's studies are anti-feminist and may be favoured by some men who have no interest whatsoever in promoting feminist theory and practice. Hearn (2004) argues for 'Critical Studies on Men' (CSM), in which the centrality of power issues in relationships is recognised. CSM incorporate a number of critiques, primarily from feminism, but also from men's responses,

particularly men's pro-feminist responses, to feminism and debates on gender relations. CSM thus refers to that range of studies that critically address men in the context of gendered power relations. Hearn's (2004) central concern is the concept of hegemony or dominance.

In most societies, and certainly in Western societies, men are interpersonally and economically dominant in most spheres of life, and this dominance has spread to heterosexual relationships (Lips, 2006; Shefer & Foster, 2001). The issue of men's power seems to be a significant, pervasive aspect of men's social and intimate relations, actions and experiences, and yet according to Hearn (2004) these matters have continued to be neglected in mainstream social science. In Hearn's (2004) view, there is a greater need to look critically at the dominant constructions, powers and authorities of men - in relation to women, but also to female partners. What is at issue here is the persistent presence of accumulations of power and powerful resources by certain men, the doing of power and dominance in many men's practices, and the pervasive social category of men with power. Men's power and dominance can be structural and interpersonal, public and/or private. It also includes violations and violence of various kinds, and this includes and highlights interpartner violence against female partners (Abrahams, 2002; Abrahams et al., 2004; Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005).

In recent years many writers have started to look critically at masculinity and its effect on business, global issues, politics and, importantly, at social relationships (Connell, 2008; Conway, 2011; Elias & Beasley, 2009; Hearn, 2004). Today Connell's work undoubtedly provides the central reference point for many writers on men and hegemonic masculinity (Conway, 2011; Elias & Beasley, 2009). Connell's (2005a; 2008) work on hegemonic masculinity is linked to gender and power and Connell argues that within certain social contexts there exist specific gender orders in which a particular ideology of hegemonic masculinity dominates (Conway, 2011; Elias & Beasley, 2009; Morrell, Jewkes, Lindegger & Hamlall, 2013). The term hegemonic masculinity, reflects Connell's (2005b) understanding of how a particular set of ideologies provides the ideological support for patriarchal social relations. Such important research reveals how hegemonic dominance can be transferred to intimate relationships in the form of patriarchy (Lips, 2006).



In essence, it seems that Connell (2008) recognises the overall hierarchical positioning of men as a group in relation to women as a group, which inevitably includes female partners.

Increasingly, South African research also highlights the gender power issues that are pertinent in intimate relationships (Morrell, 2006; Ratele, Strebel, Shefer & Fouten, 2013; Richter & Morrell, 2006; Shefer, Crawford, Strebel, Simbayi, Dwadwa-Henda, & Cloete, 2008). Shefer and Foster (2001) posits that feminist analyses of gender power inequalities have uncovered heterosexuality as a central location for the reproduction of patriarchy, and that empirical studies have highlighted women's lack of negotiation and men's dominance in heterosex. Within the South African context, research on heterosexuality has mainly highlighted the intimidating and violent nature of these relationships and the powerlessness of young girls/women (Shefer & Foster, 2001). Shefer and Foster (2001) emphasise the need for the development of discourses which challenge the negative construction of girls'/women's sexuality and sexual desires, and the need to put forward a positive acknowledgement of women as sexual agents. They propose that educational interventions, such as sex education (presently conceptualised as part of 'life skills' in South Africa) in schools and other educational institutions, have an important role to play in reconstructing discourses on female sexuality. Furthermore, Shefer et al. (2004) argue that one of the areas of challenge for gender transformation in South African psychology is to develop a South African psychology that represents indigenous experiences of gender; one that is gender-sensitive and gender-inclusive. From a social constructionist view, it seems impossible to study intimacy within the South African context without understanding the issues that are pertinent within such gendered relations.

### **3.2.7 Conclusion**

Many of the earlier theories by Freud, Erikson and Bowlby that argue that the construction of adult intimacy as an inevitable, biological, universal and natural process for all individuals, is problematic. This is because such theories do not consider the contextual factors that define intimacy or the gender and patriarchal issues in which intimacy is situated within heterosex (Shefer & Foster, 2001), particularly in low-income communities such as the one under study. Most studies

of intimacy also reflect that much research has been done with affluent, young, middleclass, white participants, but very few have been done with poorer, non-white couples. This research will be grounded in the social constructionist perspective that highlights the social, economic and historical influences on intimacy (Dean, 2011; Durrheim, 1997). As has been discussed in detail, social constructionism advocates that the individual is embedded within the social, historic and cultural forces shaping his/her context.

### **3.3 Definitions and conceptualisations of intimacy**

The field of intimacy is a vital field of study, especially in Western countries, with a wide range of established and emerging topics within this field. The last decades have witnessed a huge number of papers published on a wide range of topics pertaining to intimacy. These papers indicate that many researchers agree that we have an inherent, universal need for intimacy, particularly within couple relationships (Gaia, 2002). Despite the consensus that intimacy is an important part of human experience (Gaia, 2002), no single definition of intimacy exists, and it seems to be an elusive concept (Kouneski & Olson, 2004; Prager, 1995; Ratele, 2005). According to Laurenceau and Kleinman (2005), these many definitions of intimacy reflect the various perspectives taken by each theorist or researcher.

Patrick et al. (2007) state that one's ability to achieve intimacy is related to differentiation of self. Differentiation of self contains an individual's ability to remain in a relationship with a partner while maintaining a sense of self. This implies that the individual who is able to present him- or herself more authentically in a relationship, and communicate his or her needs more effectively to the partner, will be able to develop a higher level of intimacy (Patrick et al., 2007). Lips (2006), agrees that the way we construct our worlds is linked to the concept of self, but notes that the self is socially constructed, and that people of different cultures have different versions of the self. As mentioned earlier, the social constructionist perspective acknowledges these different constructions of the self in different cultural settings. For example, Westernised, North American people tend to

have a more individualistic independent construction of the self, whilst Asian people may have a more relational or collectivist construction of the self, (Adams et al., 2004; Lips, 2006).

Several authors emphasise the experiential and affection component of intimacy. According to Fehr (2004), an affective bond or connection between two people results from mutual trust, acceptance, and validation. This affective bond develops through the experiences of close intimate behaviours (e.g. holding hands, talking, sex, etc.) within the relationship. Fehr (2004) theorises that through these experiences of close intimate behaviours, we develop cognitive models, or schemas, of behaviours that become associated with feelings of intimacy (Fehr, 2004; Radmacher & Azmitia, 2006). For example, a partner may experience a deep emotional connection of love and intimacy, during intimate times spend together and subsequently make the connection that “my partner loves me when s/he spends intimate time with me”.

The interpersonal process model of intimacy (Reis & Shaver, 1988), is a framework that has been widely used for explaining the development of feelings of intimacy between two partners (Debrot, Cook, Perrez & Horn, 2012; Laurenceau, Feldman, Barrett, & Rovine, 2005; Mashek & Aron, 2004; Reis & Rusbult, 2004). Intimacy can be viewed as a product of the interaction with the partner rather than as a one-dimensional phenomenon (Prager, 1995). Within the interpersonal model, intimacy refers to the feeling of being understood, validated, and cared for by the partner (Clark & Wilkinson, 2006; Debrot et al., 2012; Reis & Rusbult, 2004; Reis & Shaver, 1988).

The interpersonal processes of (i) self-disclosure and (ii) partner responsiveness were found to correlate highly with satisfying experiences of intimacy (Laurenceau & Kleinman, 2005). Intimacy arises when the individual's disclosure is followed by a responsive reaction from the interacting partner. Responsiveness is defined as thoughtful, empathic behaviour that communicates respect and appreciation (Debrot et al., 2012; Mashek & Aron, 2004; Reis & Rusbult, 2004). It can be communicated in several ways to the partner, both verbally and non-verbally (Debrot, 2012; Laurenceau et al., 2005; Reis & Rusbult, 2004). The two terms will be discussed separately in the paragraphs below.

In North American contexts, intimacy has frequently and widely been used synonymously with self-disclosure (Baumeister & Barslavsky, 1999; Cassidy, 2001; Laurenceau & Kleinman, 2005). Laurenceau and Kleinman (2005) define intimacy as a feeling of closeness that develops from the communication process of self-disclosure between partners. Self-disclosure is defined by these authors as the verbal communication of very personal information, thoughts and emotions, through which partners relate their perceptions, feelings, fears and doubts of the inner self to each other (Laurenceau & Kleinman, 2005). Self-disclosure enables intimate and private information to emerge in the relationship that would not normally be revealed in everyday situations (Laurenceau & Kleinman, 2005). Greeff and Malherbe (2001) also emphasise the importance of self-disclosure and point out that it is a determinant of the level of intimacy that couples experience. Laurenceau et al. (2004) propose that there are two types of self-disclosure, namely: (i) factual and descriptive self-disclosure (the communication of personal facts and information), and (ii) emotional self-disclosure (the communication of emotions and opinions). Emotional self-disclosure is most closely related to intimacy, because it allows for a person's deepest feelings and thoughts to be validated by the intimate partner and meet the interpersonal needs of the individual. Non-verbal behaviours such as touching, gazing and body orientation are expressions that interact with verbal disclosure to produce intimacy in the relationship (Laurenceau et al., 2004).

Various researchers (Fehr, 2004; Laurenceau & Kleinman, 2005; Radmacher & Azmitia, 2006) found that adults most frequently listed self-disclosure behaviours to feelings of intimacy. Research indicates that adults in Western contexts chose self-disclosure as the most important behaviour in establishing and maintaining a sense of intimacy in a relationship (Adams et al., 2004).

While North American authors emphasise the centrality of self-disclosure and partner-disclosure in intimacy, Adams et al. (2004) argue that other cultures in West Africa accentuate interpersonal responsiveness and not self-disclosure. Adams et al. (2004) propose that partners who live in a world in which independence is promoted, for example Western contexts, may be particularly interested in processes such as self-disclosure to help build relationships. However, partners who live in settings in which interdependence is valued, such as West Africa, may have greater experiences of inherent connections and may not have such a great need to engage in intimate self-

disclosure to create additional connections. West African settings also discourage open self-disclosure and partners are encouraged to exercise caution in their revelations to one another as it may leave them vulnerable and open to malicious gossip or blackmail. It is believed that the person closest to one can cause the most harm (Adams et al., 2004).

Jamieson (1999) also notes that empirical evidence suggests that self-disclosure is not the only or dominant pathway to intimacy between couples; love and care expressed through actions can be another way partners express intimacy. Jamieson (1999) further notes that the accentuation of self-disclosure in the pure relationship which “ involves opening up to each other, enjoying each other’s unique qualities and sustaining trust through mutual disclosure” (p. 477) does not acknowledge the gender inequalities that characterises many intimate relationships. This will be further discussed in Chapter 6. Another critique against the acceptance of self-disclosure as necessary or central for intimacy is that many men’s socialised alexithymia may restrict their ability to self-disclose (Levant, 2011). Alexithymia is defined as the inability to identify and use language to describe emotional states (i.e. without words for emotions) (Levant, 2011; Uzun, 2003). An intimacy definition that privileges self-disclosure may therefore discriminate against many men’s intimacy pathways.

The second component in the interpersonal model is that of responsiveness. Laurenceau and Kleinman (2005) argue that partner responsiveness is equally important as self-disclosure in the development of intimacy. Partner responsiveness is the process in which the listening partner communicates understanding, caring and validation in response to the other partner’s self-disclosure (Laurenceau & Kleinman, 2005). Authors such as Baumeister and Barslavsky (1999) and Cassidy (2001) emphasise this reciprocal dimension of intimacy and state that it is not only the disclosure of inner information that is important in forging intimacy; a warm and sympathetic response from the listener is also necessary. Intimacy involves the perception that one’s partner really listens and understands (Emmers-Sommer, 2004; Reis & Rusbult, 2004). According to Bagarozzi (2001), the self-disclosing partner needs to feel that the listening partner is receptive and reciprocating (i.e. responding in the same manner). Research has found a positive relationship between self-disclosure,

partner responsiveness and the experience of high levels of intimacy (Baumeister & Barslavsky, 1999; Laurenceau & Kleinman 2005).

Debrot et al. (2012) investigated two concrete forms of communicating responsiveness in reaction to the partner's emotional state, which is termed enacted responsiveness. Firstly, enacted responsiveness is communicated through kind gestures to the partner, including tangible behaviours such as cooking a favourite lunch or dinner, leaving a thoughtful note or sending a caring text message (Debrot et al., 2012). Secondly, it is communicated by showing the partner affection by means of responsive touches, such as hugging or stroking. Touch has been shown to intensify the experience of intimacy (Debrot et al., 2012).

Debrot et al. (2012) emphasise that enacted responsiveness is of particular importance for the experience of intimacy in the daily lives of couples: "The perception of the partner as responsive promoted their own intimacy feelings, and also significantly increased the intimate experience of the partner. Being perceived as a responsive person by one's partner, seems to enhance the feelings of intimacy felt toward one's partner" (p. 624). Debrot et al. (2012) conclude that deeds matter, and that concrete acts of responsiveness to a partner's affective state seem to have a direct positive effect on the feelings of intimacy of partners. The degree to which individuals perceive their partner as responsive in their daily lives is partially determined by the partner's actual responsive behaviour (Debrot et al., 2012). In contrast, Adams et al. (2004) highlight that instead of the overwhelming emphasis on intimate disclosure and verbal responsiveness observed in North American cultures, West African partners emphasise cheerful responsiveness to relational obligations. This means that individuals feel closer to their partner if their partner responds by performing the relational duties shared in the relationship.

Prager (1995) and Prager and Roberts (2004) caution that any conceptualisation or definition of intimacy needs to be congruent with everyday concepts about the meaning of intimacy. Due to the contextual and dynamic nature of relationships over time, a simplex and static definition of intimacy is probably not attainable (Prager, 1995). For this reason, Prager (1995) and Prager and

Roberts (2004) offer a multivalent conception of intimacy occurring in both intimate interactions and intimate relationships. Prager and Roberts (2004) argue that, in contrast to many other conceptualisations of intimacy that assume intimate verbal interactions, their conceptualisation allows for the incorporation of non-verbal and sexual exchanges into intimate interactions.

### **3.3.1 Intimate interaction and interactional intimacy**

According to Prager and Roberts (2004), intimate interactions can be distinguished from non-intimate interactions by three necessary conditions: (i) self-revealing behaviour, (ii) positive involvement with the other, and (iii) shared understandings. These authors advocate that self-revealing behaviours are those that reveal personal, private aspects of the self to another when in a private space (Prager & Roberts, 2004). This includes both verbal and non-verbal behaviour such as physical touch and sexual contact (Prager & Roberts, 2004). Being self-revealing implies a willingness to drop defences and to allow the other person to witness and know personal and private aspects of the self. Self-revealing behaviour also includes expressing vulnerable emotions such as hurt, guilt, or sadness (Prager & Roberts, 2004).

Prager and Roberts (2004) argue that for an interaction to be intimate, the couple needs to be in a condition of positive involvement with each other. Involvement requires that partners focus their full attention on the occurring interaction. Positive refers to the positive regard partners have for one another, which is communicated through verbal and non-verbal cues. Positive involvement in the interaction is observable through both verbal and non-verbal behaviours and is signified through evidence of immediacy. Immediacy is defined as the directness and intensity of interaction between two entities. Immediacy is indicated through non-verbal cues such as increased closeness, more gazing, touching, more direct body orientation, more forward leaning, greater facial expressiveness, frequent head nods, more relational gestures and increased postural openness. Verbal cues include following of the partner's communication and thematic continuity, and use of linguistic cues that place the content of the conversation in the present moment (Prager & Roberts, 2004).

Thirdly, intimate interactions are characterised by shared understanding of each other's selves. This is a sense of knowing or understanding some aspects of each other's inner experiences, such as private thoughts, feelings, beliefs and sexual fantasies. Prager and Roberts (2004) postulate that intimate relating is at the core of two people knowing each other. The knowledge of each other endures beyond the interaction, and informs and deepens with succeeding interactions between partners. Prager and Roberts (2004) argue that not all knowing involves verbal disclosure. For example, a satisfying sexual encounter can also communicate needs and desires and can deepen future sexual relations.

Prager and Roberts (2004) argue further that when the three features of self-revealing behaviour, positive involvement with the other and shared understanding are present, the interaction has reached some measure of interactional intimacy. These authors, however, acknowledge that the degree and quality of intimacy in any given interaction differs widely due to variations in the depth of self-exposure, the intensity of positive involvement and the extent of the shared personal understandings in different relationships. When couples experience their most intimate interactions, they allow the other person into the private, personal and vulnerable space of their unguarded, undefended selves (Prager & Roberts, 2004). This happens visually, verbally and non-verbally and it involves intense feelings of connection and deep understanding. These authors further state that, "a deeply intimate encounter is exemplified by two partners maintaining eye contact and forward body orientation while disclosing feelings of uncertainty about themselves as relationship partners who nevertheless love one another deeply" (p. 46).

### **3.3.2 Intimate relationships and relational intimacy**

Prager and Roberts (2004) propose that intimate interactions are the building blocks of an intimate relationship, and that an intimate relationship is defined in relation to the various on-going and frequently occurring intimate interactions that take place between partners in the relationship. Prager (1995) therefore suggests that intimacy is constructed over time and is characterised by a history of intimate interactions. The more frequently couples have rewarding intimate interactions; the more likely they are to experience a deeper form of intimacy and consequently an intimate



relationship. According to Prager and Roberts (2004), partners sharing an intimate relationship, have been involved in multiple intimate interactions, and accumulate a shared understanding of each other. Thus, an intimate relationship is characterised by mutual, accumulated, shared personal knowledge of each other and the frequency of the intimate interactions.

Prager and Roberts (2004) argue that beyond these minimal criteria for defining an intimate relationship is the continuum of relational intimacy that specifies the degree and quality of intimacy in the relationship. Prager and Roberts (2004) advocate that relational intimacy varies because of the function of the following two factors: (i) the extensiveness of intimate relating and (ii) the accuracy of the accumulating shared personal understandings. The extensiveness of intimate relating refers to the frequency of intimate interaction and the degree and quality of interactional intimacy in those interactions, as defined by the three necessary and sufficient conditions of self-revealing behaviour, positive involvement with the other and shared understandings.

This implies that higher levels of relational intimacy correlate with frequent interactions that involve high levels of personal disclosure, intense positive involvement and extensive domains of shared personal understanding. The understanding and knowledge gained of each other and the self-in-relation-to-other through intimate interactions, endures and accumulates through time, and is stored in what Prager and Roberts term cognitive structures, which guide future interactive behaviour (Prager & Roberts, 2004).

### **3.4 Conclusions**

These various definitions, conceptualisations and understandings of intimacy seem to share common characteristics: a feeling of closeness and connectedness that develops through shared communication or activities between interacting and responsive partners. From a social constructionist perspective the conceptualisation of intimacy must also acknowledge the social processes involved in intimacy (Dean, 2011; Durrheim, 1997), and that it is constructed and

reconstructed within a particular social, economic, political and historical context (Furphy, 2011; Puig et al., 2008). It is also important to consider the dominant discourses of intimate relationships and intimacy when researching adult intimacy experiences as these discourses inform the goals, norms and standards for relationships, and further shape how people interact in and experience these relationships (Furphy, 2011). A common presumption of previous studies is that there is a secure and equal climate in which to express opinions and partner differences. It implies that each partner has a voice, speaks, and is heard by the other partner. These conceptions of intimacy do not seem to consider that in more patriarchal cultures, women have less of a voice and are less heard than men (Lips, 2006). Also, these definitions do not necessarily reflect a cross-cultural perspective (Radmacher & Azmitia, 2006). In line with social constructionist ideas, in this study, intimacy is understood and researched in the context in which it occurs, as intimacy is a socially constructed (Adams et., 2004) and phenomenological experience, and as such, is impossible to describe objectively (Patrick et al., 2007).

A social constructionist conceptualisation and definition of intimacy is particularly useful to research the experiences of intimacy because it constructs intimacy as a process of meaning making (Dean, 2011; Nightingale & Cromby, 2002). Moreover, a social constructionist definition includes any behaviour, experience or instance in which meaning is co-created (Furphy, 2011). Such a definition also allows for a broader scope of behaviours and experiences to be included in conceptualisations of intimacy (Furphy, 2011).

### **3.5 Prominent themes in literature**

In the following sections, I will present and discuss the themes in the literature that are most relevant to my study:

#### **3.5.1 Gender and Intimacy**

Research indicates gender differences in the experience, and expression of intimacy in the intimate relationships (Greeff & Malherbe, 2001; Hook et al., 2003; Patrick & Beckenbach, 2009). Patrick and Beckenbach (2009) point out that various researchers had different findings regarding men's and women's definitions and experiences of intimacy. Hook et al. (2003) suggest that "women believe intimacy to be love, affection and the expression of warm feelings, while men believe it to be the expression of sexual behaviour and physical closeness" (p. 465). Women report more feelings of intimacy than their male partners (Patrick & Beckenbach, 2009). According to Hook et al. (2003), women place emphasis on 'togetherness or we-ness'. Radmacher and Azmitia (2006) found in their study with young American adults, that men and women reported equal amounts of self-disclosure in intimate relationships, but that young adult men reported less emotional support and more shared activities than women. Thus, shared activities predicted emotional closeness for the young men in Radmacher's and Azmitia's (2006) study. Patrick and Beckenbach (2009) also found that men experience and express intimacy through activities that involve action. This concurs with Hook et al. (2003), who suggest that men tend to rather do things for their female partners as an expression of love and intimacy, and did not always understand their female partners' need to talk things through. According to Hook et al. (2003), these differences may lead to relationship problems.

Hook et al. (2003) also found that women tend to initiate communication with their husbands more often than their husbands initiated communication with them. Intimate contact such as eye contact, affectionate touching and verbal sharing was a stronger forecaster of intimacy and satisfaction in

marriage for women than for men (Hook et al., 2003). Gender differences in non-verbal behaviour may also contribute to how males and females experience intimacy in the relationship. Laurenceau and Kleinman (2005), for example, reported that women in their expression of intimacy, smiled more, used more eye contact and generally communicated more emotion in their faces and postures than men.

Some researchers argue, however, that gender differences in intimacy have been over-emphasised, resulting in the neglect of similarities between the genders. Hook et al. (2003) and Patrick and Beckenbach (2009), for example, draw our attention to the fact that many of the studies on intimacy and gender have mostly been done from a female perspective, in which the importance of communication, self-disclosure and partner disclosure are highlighted. These studies do not consider that men may have a different intimacy mode.

Gaia (2002) also concludes that gender differences in intimacy are exaggerated and seem to be based on socialised differences regarding the expression of intimacy rather than the experience of intimacy. According to Patrick and Beckenbach (2009), women are socialised to focus more on relationships, whereas men are socialised to complete chores and tasks for their partners as an expression of intimacy. Mackey, Diemer and O'Brien (2000) suggest that due to this type of socialisation, men may mainly experience and express intimacy through shared activities, and women through verbal self-expression. Hook et al. (2003) argue that men are socialised to assume positions of power, and to think, speak and act in a hierarchical manner in the relationship. For this reason, when men speak or express themselves in the intimate relationship, they may be more inclined towards procuring and maintaining the upper hand in the relationship (Hook et al., 2003).

Over the last two decades, South African researchers also strongly emphasised the links between gender inequalities, HIV/Aids and interpartner violence. And rightfully so, as South Africa has one of the highest HIV infection rates in the world. By 2002 about five million people were infected with HIV (Dunkle, Jewkes, Brown, Gray, McIntyre, & Harlow, 2004; Ndinda, Uzodike, Chimbwete, Pool & Microbicide Development Programme, 2007). Another report published by

Statistics South Africa in 2007 also reveals that at the national level, there has been an 87% increase in registered deaths in South Africa over the 1997-2005 period, with a 169% increase in mortality for the age group 25-49 years due to AIDS (Naidoo, 2008). Ndinda et al. (2007) argue that since the main means of HIV transmission in sub-Saharan Africa is heterosexual intercourse, it is deemed critical to understand gender relations in the development of new methods of HIV prevention. For this reason many researchers have focussed on gender relations in the context of HIV in South Africa. The discussions and findings indicate that a gender power imbalance, which is found to a varying degree in all societies, translates into a power imbalance in sexual interactions that increases vulnerability to HIV/Aids (Jewkes et al., 2003). These authors further demonstrate that in South Africa, research on sexuality has shown multiple ways in which ideas about sex and gender create circumstances of greater HIV risk. Jewkes, et al. (2003) advocates that gender-based violence and health studies clearly indicate the importance of gender inequalities as risk factors for sexual ill-health.

Globally women are 1.6 more times likely to be infected than men and 2.5 more times likely to be infected in the Africa epidemic (Ndinda et al., 2007). Various factors contribute to the greater vulnerability of women to HIV infection than men. These include: “women’s biological make up that exposes them to greater infection during intercourse; social norms that emphasise female chastity and condone male promiscuity; cultural factors that may favour early pregnancy and discourage condom use or facilitate intercourse with older men who are likely to be infected; unequal partnerships that accept female subservience and male dominance; violence against women; as well as the economic dependency of many women on men for their survival and the greater recourse to prostitution by women seeking economic survival” (Ndinda et al., 2007, p. 844). Naidoo (2008) also noted that in light of extreme poverty people have been left to their own devices and it has compelled people, in particular women, to display considerable resourcefulness in finding the means to support themselves and their families. In most cases such women has engaged in sexual activities and unprotected sex to do so. For this reason, Naidoo (2008) further argues that the sexual and reproductive lives of individuals are intricate matters of emotion, motivation, rationality, obligation, and are entangled with domestic and communal finances and politics. Other studies by Shefer, Clowes and Vergnani, (2012) and Strebel, Shefer, Potgieter, Wagner and Shabala (2013) also recognised the centrality of transactional relationships in risky sexual practices among young women. Young women may exchange sex for money, goods, or other benefits, including alcohol

and drugs, and such behaviour has been shown to play an important role in unsafe and coercive sexual behaviour.

### **3.5.2 Intimacy and Sex**

Sexual intimacy is seen by many people as synonymous with intimacy (Schachner & Shaver, 2007; Vohs & Baumeister, 2004). According to Vohs and Baumeister (2004), an intimate relationship should consist of high levels of sexual passion and intimacy. However, sexual passion may be more prominent in the early stage of a relationship, while intimacy arises more slowly until it reaches a plateau. After several good years together, intimacy may remain high, but sexual passion may decline later in the relationship due to aging (Jamieson, 1999; Vohs & Baumeister, 2004). This concurs with Sternberg's idea of companionate love, which is often found in marriages in which less passion (decreased sexual or physical desire) is experienced, but a deep affection and commitment remains (Sternberg, 1986).

The discourse of sexual differences between women and men is a well-known and popular discourse. Men are believed to have a higher sex drive (sexual motivation) than women and pursue multiple orgasms (Vohs & Baumeister, 2004). Women, on the other hand, have the capability for multiple or more orgasms than men, but do not necessarily want more orgasms (Lips, 2006; Vohs & Baumeister, 2004). Men are purported to be ready for sexual intercourse much sooner than women and require less intimacy to generate higher levels of sexual passion; men also tend to desire sexual intimacy more frequently than women (Vohs & Baumeister, 2004). Conflict in heterosexual relationships concerning sexual intimacy often arises from men wanting more frequent sex than women (Lips, 2006; Vohs & Baumeister, 2004). It is also argued that enjoying a satisfying sexual relationship improves the entire intimate relationship. Conversely, an intimate relationship may be fundamental to experiencing a gratifying sexual relationship (Bryant & Stanik, 2012). Studies that have tried to untangle the issue have suggested that an intimate relationship and sexual satisfaction are interconnected and that if one is altered, it affects the other in a bidirectional manner (Bryant & Stanik, 2012; Sprecher, Christopher, & Cate 2004).

Greeff and Malherbe (2001) also concluded, in their South African study, that men's and women's experience of sexual intimacy differs significantly. Women reported a greater difference between their experience of sexual intimacy and the degree of sexual intimacy than men did. Men reported less sexual intimacy, and were less satisfied with their sexual experience than women (Greeff & Malherbe, 2001). Bryant and Stanik (2012) highlight that dissatisfaction with sexual intimacy in marriage, can lead to individuals being more willing to participate in an extramarital sexual relationship.

Andersen and Cyranowski (1995) emphasise that positive feelings and emotions of romantic attachments or love are tied closely to experiences of sexual feelings for women. For example, in sexual fantasies, women focus on personal-emotional feelings, while men concentrate on the sexual content of the fantasies (Andersen & Cyranowski, 1995). Women's feelings of sexuality are also dependent on their own judgements of themselves as individuals who are loving, passionate and romantic (Andersen & Cyranowski, 1995).

What is often not emphasised in mainstream sex literature is that sex is socially constructed (Wildschut, 2005). Men's and women's behaviour is also influenced by socio-cultural norms and expectations within their society (Wildschut, 2005). The traditional sexual script usually ascribes men more power and control than women when engaging in sexual interactions, for example initiating sexual activities, and expressing their sexual needs, wants and desires. It seems that traditional socio-cultural norms encourage men, to a larger extent than women, to embrace and discover their sexuality. Lips (2006) also argues that sexuality is often approached from a male perspective. From this perspective, sex involves having heterosexual intercourse and penetration, but Lips (2006) argues that many women prefer cunnilingus, and/or stimulation of the clitoris or vulva with the lips or tongue.

According to Wildschut (2005), men are socialised to believe that real men initiate sexual activities, that real men are in charge of sexual activities and that sexual penetration is the ultimate achievement of becoming a real man. Traditionally, men are expected to know everything about sex

and always be ready to have sex (Wildschut, 2005). Young men are encouraged to seduce and coerce women into sexual intercourse, to be heterosexually active, and not monogamous (Wildschut, 2005). Korobov and Thorne (2006) concur that for men it becomes important to master the traditional seduction scripts. Seduction scripts emphasise that men should display competence in the way they attract girls, should objectify females, disclose tales of success and eroticise sex (Korobov & Thorne, 2006). This was illustrated in a South Africa study conducted by Akintola, Ngubane and Makhaba (2012), who found that males pressured their female university partners to have sex with them. According to these authors, men used a range of coercive behaviours, such as verbal pressure, manipulation, tricks and force to obtain sex from their female partners (Akintola et al., 2012; Sawyer-Kurian, Wechsberg & Luseno, 2010). Female participants reported feeling pain, regret and a sense of loss, because they were coerced into having sex when they were not ready for it or did not want it (Akintola et al., 2012).

Women are more restricted in the sexual arena, as sexually active women are perceived in a more negative light than men (Lips, 2006; Pattman, 2002; Shefer & Foster, 2001). Furthermore, Lips (2006) advocates that this double standard may vary across cultures. Traditional African cultures tend to set higher moral standards for women than for men. According to Lips (2006), 54% of societies across the world allow men to have extramarital sex and only 11% allow women the same sexual freedom. Lips (2006) also notes that researchers have been unable to find societies that allowed wives to have extramarital sex but not husbands.

According to Lips (2006), members of a particular society construct sex roles for women and men and then positively or negatively prohibit inappropriate behaviour. Fletcher (2002) and Patrick and Beckenbach (2009) contend that gender differences and expectations are shaped by communal and societal influences, and from these individuals create meaning of who they are and their expected behaviour. According to Lips (2006), the dominant cultural script requires that men perform a more active or agentic role than women. Men are expected to initiate and direct sexual activities and also determine the tempo of sexual interactions and type of sexual activities (Lips, 2006). Heterosexual women, on the other hand, are expected to assume a complementary submissive responsibility. They must submit to the male partner's needs, wants and desires, and must wait for their male



partner to initiate and direct sexual activities (Lips, 2006). This concurs with findings in a South African study that sex is regarded as a male dominant domain in which men lead women into sex and expect women to be submissive and passive (Kaufman, Shefer, Crawford, Simbayi & Kalichman, 2008).

Given the influence of gender roles, community and culture on individuals' behaviour, it is regarded as imperative in the present research to explore the meanings that both men and women in the community under study attach to intimacy, and how this shapes men's and women's expression and experiences of intimacy.

### **3.5.3 Intimacy and Religion**

Researchers have also found a positive correlation between couples' shared religious activities and the experience of intimacy (Marks, Tanner, Nesteruk, Chaney & Baumgartner, 2012). Hünler and Gençöz (2005) and Marks et al. (2012) found that religious activities such as Christian worship, Bible study, praying together and going to church together enhanced intimacy and commitment in relationships. Studies have consistently shown that couples who practice religion regularly experience a greater overall relationship satisfaction, happiness and positive effects than many others who do not practice any sort of religion (Hünler & Gençöz, 2005). Blank, Mahmood, Fox and Guterbock (2002) note that a church offers partners or couples a spiritual way of life, as well as mental support that contributes to their psychological and physical well-being. Levin (2010) and Hussain (2011) also note that religion is something that many people and couples, regardless of income or race, hold dear and it forms an important part of their life.

Marks (2005), however, concludes that even though "religion is often a source of help and integration, certain religious expressions appear to be part of the problem" (p. 88) in the relationship, rather than part of the solution. Crooks and Bauer (2002) also mention the negative impact of religion, and found that members of more rigid orthodox religious groups have less sexual

interest, response, frequency and pleasure in relationships. These authors conclude that members of such religious groups experience more sexual inhibitions, anxiety, guilt, shame and disgust during sexual intimacy (Crooks & Bauer, 2002).

There is also evidence that religion correlates with gender roles. According to Gamble (2004), the term ‘religion’ refers in general to “beliefs and practices through which people express their understanding of divine powers or of the spiritual dimension of human existence and structure an appropriate approach” (p. 158). Religion in the Western world, especially Christianity, still emphasises the “belief in a single transcendent and masculine divine being as creator and sustainer of human life” (Gamble, 2004, p. 158). Crooks and Bauer (2002) believe that Christian and Islamic traditions all reinforce male superiority and female submissiveness in relationships, and that an individual who receives such religious instruction is likely to be socialised to accept certain gender stereotypes, for example that men are superior to women in relationships.

In Christianity, for example, God is represented as male using words such as ‘Father God’, ‘Jesus, the son of God’ and ‘Jesus, King of Kings’ (Crooks & Bauer, 2002; Van der Watt, 2007). On the other hand, women’s expected gender roles are projected in images of Mary as the mother figure, the one who shows emotion at Jesus’s crucifixion. It is furthermore, suggested that Mary Magdalene, by washing Jesus’s feet with her hair, reflects the respectful, submissive nature of women (Crooks & Bauer, 2002). Gender roles are reinforced from the pulpit on a continuous basis as seen in the following passages that ascribe different roles to men and women and portray men as superior to women (Van der Watt, 2007). Feminists also criticise such religious beliefs and practices, as these are seen as privileging a male perspective (Gamble, 2004).

The Bible: Ephesians 5: 22-24 (King James Version)

*<sup>22</sup> Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. <sup>23</sup> For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. <sup>24</sup> Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.*

Quran: Sura 4: 35

*Men are guardians over women because Allah has made some of them excel others, and because men spend on them of their wealth. So virtuous women are obedient, and guard the secrets of their husbands with Allah's protection. And as for those, on whose part you fear disobedience, admonish them and keep away from them in their beds and chastise them. Then if they obey you, seek not a way against them. Surely, Allah is High and Great.*

According to Van der Watt (2007), when male dominance is rooted in religion, it enters an arena that society regards as sacred, and which people accept unquestionably. Van der Watt (2007) claims that South African churches propagate the notion that males are the head of the home and that females are consigned to positions of supporting wives and nurturers of the home and, in so doing, churches contribute to the maintenance of gender stereotypes. As head of the home, men are supposed to provide spiritual guidance, protect, provide and be a role model to the family, while women to take in a more submissive and supportive position (Van Der Watt, 2007). Boonzaaier and De La Rey (2003) argue that religious and cultural practices in South Africa frequently reinforce and sanction violence against women. Religious ideals script the role of the good woman or wife, emphasising tolerance, caring, nurturing and being subordinate as qualities of femininity (Boonzaier & De La Rey, 2003). These authors found that when women sought the help and advice of religious leaders regarding interpartner violence, women were frequently encouraged to stay with the partner and brave the violence. In many instances in which violence took place in the marriage, women would stay with their partners to portray a respectable image (Boonzaier & De La Rey, 2003).

### **3.5.4 Low Socio-Economic Status (SES) and Intimacy**

Cox (2009) argues that to be poor is not just a case of having insufficient monetary sources, but that the following factors all compound to yield what is generally termed poverty: prolonged lack of money, accruing debts, low levels of education and skills, high rates of joblessness or underemployment, and negative self-esteem. Leibbrandt, Woolard, Finn and Argent (2010) also identified substance use, domestic violence, incarceration, depression, poverty-stricken housing and unsafe neighbourhoods as contributing to poverty. Any one of these factors can place enormous stress on a couple's relationship and most low-income couples are managing several factors at any given time (Cox, 2009). In particular, Hastings, Taylor and Austin (2004) found that the cost of living and housing severely affects the relationships of low-income couples; due to poor housing, couples are frequently separated, with men and women sleeping in separate quarters. This seems tonegatively affect the couple's sexual intimacy and the frequency of intimate interactions. Evidence suggests that marriages amongst poorer groups, such as African Americans, are often weighed down by discontent, poorer relationship quality, more frequent thoughts of divorce and higher proportions of marital break-ups (Bryant & Stanik, 2012).

According to Edin and Reed (2005), research has long indicated that stressful life events obstruct the couple's ability to engage positively with each other in intimate relationships. Low-income couples also frequently experience conflict in the intimate relationship, and often attribute their conflict to a lack of love and attention, physical abuse, cheating, mistrust, criminal activities, financial problems, employment problems and substance abuse (Cox, 2009). Other studies also show that unemployment, poverty, limited education, inadequate access to medical and social services, overcrowding and other factors associated with a low socio-economic status adversely affect the intimate lives of many low-income individuals (Hastings et al., 2004; Mathews, Abrahams, Jewkes, Martin & Lombard, 2009). Moreover, it has been demonstrated that the lower the SES, the higher the psychosocial problems in intimate relationships (Mathews et al., 2009).

Amongst the poorer Americans marriage rates have fallen, while couples cohabitating has increased dramatically. The greatest increases of couples cohabiting are among those individuals who are less educated and have lower incomes (Cox, 2009). In comparison to married couples, cohabiting couples' relationships are typically less stable, which may be both a cause and an outcome of stressed relationships (Klausi & Owen, 2009). These authors highlight that these instabilities are related to greater uncertainty about each partner's functions, positions and responsibilities in the cohabiting couple's relationship. Cohabiting couples also do not have a sense of permanence in the intimate relationship (Klausi & Owen, 2009).

Even though marriage rates are significantly lower among the poor as compared to the general population, their attitudes reflect a strong belief in and a deep respect for marriage (Cox, 2009; Edin & Reed, 2005). Edin and Reed (2005) indicated that disadvantaged, low-income couples have high regard for marriage, but feel that they are unable to sustain the high standards of relationship quality and financial stability necessary in marriage. To these low-income cohabiting couples, marriage is a sign of success expressed by steady employment and emotional stability (Cox, 2009).

Harding (2007) and Hastings et al. (2004), mention that certain characteristics of intimate relationships may differ for individuals or partners from different socioeconomic backgrounds. Hastings et al. (2004) argue that separation from the representative culture caused by poverty and unemployment may lead to people in marginalised neighbourhoods developing cultural or community representations of intimacy that are dissimilar from that of the mainstream culture (Hastings et al., 2004). According to Harding (2007), the cultural context of low-income communities originated from the mainstream culture, but is modified or reconstructed to adequately suit the home-grown context.

Research has also found that socio-economic determinants significantly shape heterosexual intimate relations in poorer African societies through the customs of transactional intimate relationships (Hunter, 2002). Transactional relationships arise when women have intimate relationships with men of their choice in order to attain material benefits. While men benefit from transactional intimate

relationships through sexual relationships, men also increase their status within their peer groups when they have an attractive woman at their side. Such men are coveted by their friends and peers and acknowledged as sexually triumphant (Hunter, 2002; Masvawure, 2010). In addition, as Hunter (2002) found, men also benefit from having someone to cook for them and who can provide other solaces in the home. According to Masvawure, Terry, Adlis and Mhloyi (2009), women from poor backgrounds engage more frequently in transactional relationships than affluent women, in an effort to sustain their physical needs.

According to Pattman (2005), society expects men to want to be the providers in heterosexual relations, which constructs a sense of provider masculinity. Research shows that in many African countries, it is quite common for women and girls to engage in what is usually a sexual relationship with men in an effort to obtain material assistance and economic wellbeing (Bhana & Pattman, 2009; Hunter, 2002; Masvawure, 2010). Within the African intimate relationships context, commitment is usually expressed through the exchange of material possessions and it is argued that such a practice is not necessarily exploitative as is frequently presumed (Furphy, 2011; Masvawure, 2010). Hunter (2002) argues that through the relatively economically privileged position of men, women have access to more financial resources, such as income and housing. Together with the deliberate action of some women to pursue men for material security, this has contributed to the construction of a certain type of heterosexual relationship amongst partners surviving poverty. Thus, in socially and economically disadvantaged contexts, women organize their sexuality in various ways to secure economic benefits from their heterosexual relationships with men who have financial resources (Masvawure, 2010).

Statistics reveal that South African women are six times more likely to be killed by their intimate partner than anywhere else in the world (Mathews et al., 2008). Research found that violence occurred in intimate relationships in which men were heavy drinkers (Mathews et al., 2008). Abrahams (2002) proposes that insufficient family and social support, a low level of education and limited opportunities for empowerment in the workplace may prevent women from leaving abusive relationships and constructing their own meaning of the abuse in their intimate relationship. Boonzaier and De La Rey (2003), for example, suggest that women interpret and explain this abuse

as a reflection of love from the husband, and violence is interpreted as jealousy. However, very little is known about men's and women's intimate experiences in these particular social contexts.

### **3.6 Methodological Limitations in International and South African Intimacy Research**

As already indicated in chapter 2, an important limitation in current intimacy research is that most such studies have been conducted in North American settings, and are embedded in Western geographic, demographic, economic, social, historic and political realities. The likelihood that intimacy may vary across different social settings is not sufficiently acknowledged (Adams et al., 2004).

Hook et al. (2003) also highlight that past studies mainly employs a student population to gather data. Many other studies also only drew inferences from the experience of the individual, and few tried to assess and understand the other partner's experience and perspective in these mature heterosexual relationships (Laurenceau & Kleinman, 2005; Mackey et al., 2000). Conradie (2006) also concludes that as with international research, South African relationship research also focussed on individual participants rather than both partners (Abrahams, et al., 2006; Boonzaier & De La Rey, 2003). She also notes that the few studies that did include both partners were mostly concerned with individuals' accounts of their relationship experiences and not with the interaction between the individuals. Conradie (2006) therefore advocates that further research should consider the incorporation of both partners' accounts of their relationship and the interaction between partners in order to further our understanding of how people construct relationships.

Many studies that focused on individual participants also included more females than males, which provided a skewed female-male ratio. Bazan (2007), for example, utilised 23 females and 12 men, while Faulkner and Lannutti (2010) used 79 women and 49 men. Further research on intimate heterosexual relationships should, importantly, acknowledge the value of balancing the ratio of female-male participants and include equal numbers of both participants. The data that was

collected in previous studies was also mainly from self-reports of individuals (Abbey, 2004; Lippert & Prager, 2001). Furthermore, several studies on intimacy utilised quantitative research methods, such as questionnaires and surveys. An example of a research instrument or tool used in these quantitative methods is the Personal Assessment of Intimacy in Relationships (PAIR) scale developed by Schaefer and Olson (1981). However, Hook et al. (2003) question the validity of such scales in measuring the main features of intimate interaction, for example communication, self-disclosure, partner disclosure and partner responsiveness (Hook et al., 2003).

The operational definitions used in such quantitative measures also assume that intimacy is synonymous with certain behaviours, such as self-disclosure (Prager, 1995), trust, emotional expression, support and physical expression (Patrick & Beckenbach 2009). Patrick and Beckenbach therefore argue that intimacy has been described from the researcher's perspective and not the participant's. Using these quantitative measures provides a limited view of how participants experience the concept of intimacy (Patrick & Beckenbach, 2009), and is also unable to offer insight into how the social context, norms and values of a specific community affect an individual's meaning, experience and expression of intimacy (Gaia, 2002; Brown Travis & White, 2000).

It is thus evident that future research on intimacy in heterosexual relationships needs to consider neglected research populations. This can be addressed by allowing for the inclusion of both partners in the relationship, equal male and female representation, the inclusion of different religious, social-economic and cultural groups and representation of different population groups. It also needs to be noted that many of the research methods as outlined in the paragraphs above investigated intimacy from the researcher's perspective and not the participant's.

In Conradie's (2006) study, in which the author provides a review of South African research on intimate relationships, she concludes that the diverse South African population is not well represented in relationship studies. Despite the fact that the majority of the South African population is Black and Coloured, Conradie (2006) indicates that most relationship research (such as that of De Villiers, 1960; De Waal, 1987; Greeff & Malherbe, 2001; Malherbe, 1995; Van



Rensburg, 1995) has included White participants. Thus, knowledge of intimacy in South Africa is derived from studies conducted with primarily White participants. In her review, Conradie also indicates that most of the studies conducted on intimacy are dated before the year 2000 (e.g. De Villiers, 1960; Naude, 1986; Van Rensburg, 1995). Current relationship research therefore does not reflect the intimate experiences of all South African groups in the last decade.

Research also found that socio-economic contexts influence and shape constructions of intimacy and intimate relationships (Cox, 2009; Edin & Reed, 2005, Leibbrandt et al., 2010). According to Conradie (2006), South African studies that indicate participants' socio-economic status include participants described as middle-class and living in urban areas of South Africa (e.g., Naude, 1986; Theron, 1982; Van Zyl, 1983). Furthermore, Conradie's (2006) review indicates that most research on intimate heterosexual relationships in South Africa reflects relationships of couples that have been married for a number of years, but little is known about other forms of intimate heterosexual relationships, such as newly married or cohabitating couples.

Moreover, most South African researchers who have conducted research on inter-partner violence (IPV) included participants from lower socio-economic backgrounds living in urban areas of South Africa (Abrahams et al., 2004; Boonzaier & De La Rey, 2003; Strebel et al., 2006). Peri-urban and rural communities are therefore neglected in South African intimate relationship studies.

Shefer et al. (2004) also argue that the majority of those who publish and who consequently determine the parameters of psychological discourse and practice have historically been White, middleclass males. Shefer et al. (2004) recognises that given the global and historical inequalities in research, has meant that the majority of researchers and authors in modern psychology have been dominantly white, and therefore knowledge has been based on the experiences of predominantly White, middle class and Western groups (Shefer et al., 2004). Shefer et al. (2004) points out that 59% of research subjects in SAJP articles were White, and these researchers highlighted the lack of representation of the experiences of the majority of South Africans in South African psychology

(Shefer et al., 2004). Since the researcher is at the centre of knowledge construction, it represents the danger of reproducing White, middle class discourses (Shefer et al., 2004).

I have already pointed out previously that Black and Coloured couples' intimate relationships have over the last decades been mostly researched within the contexts of HIV/Aids and inter-partner violence. It is indeed important that researchers acknowledge that South African men and women's historical and contemporary positions as intimate partners have to be understood in the context of South Africa's history of poverty, interpartner violence, gender inequalities and racial oppression particularly in research involving marginalised Black and Coloured African couples. However, local studies need to start challenging the negative one-dimensional discourse of intimate relationships, especially with regard to Black and Coloured relationships in South Africa. It needs to be documented that there are multiple ways in which men and women construct intimacy in the midst of their poverty and marginalised circumstances. There is thus a need to adopt a more historicised and context-enriched critical perspective in attempts to understand contemporary phenomena such as intimacy across genders and in marginalised communities (Adams et al., 2004; Ratele, 2007). For example, how does intimacy differ in impoverished communities, particularly in communities and households where multiple families may live within the boundaries of one house; or where housing is more dilapidated and cramped in comparison to the housing structures common in the extensively researched middleclass and Western-influenced cultures (Ratele et al., 2012).

### **3.7 Conclusions**

Considering the limitations of essentialist research regarding intimacy, as well as the mainstream intimacy definitions and conceptualisations of intimacy that are based on Western populations, a social constructionist perspective utilising qualitative methods will assist in generating knowledge about intimacy in Coloured population groups. A qualitative method will be used to facilitate participant couples' accounts of their lived experiences from their own perspectives. A social constructionist approach will be used to question earlier assumptions of intimacy as noted in dominant scholarly discourses of intimacy. The social constructionist approach seeks to produce a

multi-faceted account of how intimacy is expressed and experienced, considering socio-economic, political, historical and contextual factors that are relevant to the participants' lived intimate experiences.

My research aimed to examine and understand adult couples' intimacy experiences in the under studied context of a low-income, Cape Winelands community. My objective was to foreground the stories that Coloured men and women tell about the range of their intimate experiences - both positive and negative experiences. By doing so I hoped to contribute to challenging dominant narratives that tend to taint Black and Coloured heterosexual relationships (Ratele et al., 2012).

## **CHAPTER 4:**

### **THE RESEARCH COMMUNITY IN CONTEXT**

From a social constructionist point of view, phenomena and individuals are inextricably linked to social, cultural, historical and political contexts. In this chapter, I will therefore present such relevant contextual information about my research community.

My study formed part of an existing Intimate Relationship Project under the leadership Dr Elmien Lesch, Stellenbosch University. This project explores intimate relationships in one low-income Coloured community in the Cape Winelands.

The term ‘Coloured’ should be used with caution, considering that it symbolises the Apartheid practice of categorising people according to race and ethnicity (May et al., 2000; Ratele et al., 2014). Furthermore, Erasmus and Pieterse (1999) note that the term should not be used to imply a homogenous identity, because Coloured identity is fluid, unstable and heterogeneous and that social identities are only relevant and meaningful in specific contexts. In this study, the term ‘Coloured’ encompasses the complex historical, political, cultural and socio-economic factors, which have and are still shaping the living world of the specific research community.

There is a general lack of knowledge regarding Coloured history, and what is known are the stories related to racial oppression and the erosion of Coloured peoples’ civil rights (Adhikari, 2005). A range of harmful and derogatory connotations has been attached to Coloured people in the past. Coloured people were perceived as not White or African enough, a type of left over bread (Adhikari, 2005). Adhikari goes on to say that this projected the idea that Coloured people were not of the same standing as other races, and that they had no claims as an autonomous group, as they did not belong to a particular race. So Coloureds according to (Adhikari, 2005) were seen as not African, Indian nor White, implying that they were perceived as not a real nation; they were thus

seen as a left-over people after the nations were categorised. According to Adhikari (2005) this is how the term brown people emerged, a people born from African and White sexual relations. Adhikari (2005) stated that many Whites were ashamed of Coloureds, as the latter represented the result of such sexual relationships and a break or disturbance in their superior bloodline. Many Coloured people also accepted and internalised this derogatory identity and their marginalised status with shame.

Today, in the post-Apartheid era, 'Colouredness' is again shaped by different political and social changes. Adhikari (2005) reflects on the racial hierarchy, ideological conflicts, negative racial stereotypes and class divisions that are once again shaping the meaning of 'Colouredness'. In his resourceful enquiry of the 'Coloured' identity in his book *Not White Enough, Not Black Enough*, Adhikari (2005) indicates that many Coloured people during time of political reconstruction felt that they were first not white enough, now they were not Black (African) enough.

According to May, Brookes, Gossage, Croxford, Adams and Jones (2000), 57% of the Western Cape population is Coloured. Coloured', Afrikaans-speaking people form the main work force on farms in the Western Cape (May et al., 2000). This study's research participants lived in a semi-rural, farmworker community situated outside a large in the Cape Winelands. Engelbrecht (2009) conducted a survey in this research community and found that her representative sample of adult males and females had a primary school level of education with an average of five years of schooling. Participants earned limited incomes with an individual average income per month of R1703.86. Government grants provided an important source of income for many. Engelbrecht (2009) further found that unskilled labour was the most common form of labour for men and women. Most reported that they were employed as gardeners and house-helpers, respectively. A higher proportion of women in the study worked as seasonal workers, while more men were employed throughout the year. It was also found that the percentage of employed men was greater than women employed, 84% of men compared to 59% of women (Engelbrecht, 2009). These findings suggest gender-based differences in accessibility to employment opportunities and unequal income capacity between men and women. Such inequalities may make women economically more

dependent on their male partners and more vulnerable to economic, financial and other types of abuse (Engelbrecht, 2009).

According to Abrahams, et al., (2004) male superiority is manifested in the gender roles of males and is largely due to the low economic and social status and disempowerment of women in low-income groups and rural settings. Abrahams and colleagues (2006) suggest that social expectations of 'womanhood' are a strong predictor of conflict in intimate relationships. According to these expectations, women are supposed to be submissive and accept their husband's dominance (Waldman, 2006). Abrahams and Jewkes (2005) also found in their survey that many women find physical abuse acceptable and that one out of three women saw physical abuse as a sign of love and intimacy.

Such beliefs and accepted gender roles inform women's conceptualisation and construction of meaning, and legitimise male dominance in poorer rural communities (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005). According to Shefer et al. (2008), traditional gender roles are still dominant in historically and economically disenfranchised communities. It was found that in lower income, rural Western Cape farm communities, men and women uphold traditional roles in which men are featured as the head and leader of the home and women are regarded as subservient and belonging in the background. Similar conclusions were reached regarding other rural communities (Waldman, 2006). This is also the case in the proposed study's research community. The results of Engelbrecht (2009) survey in this community indicate that households mostly comprised couples and their children and, in most cases, males were considered the head of the household, by both genders. Engelbrecht (2009) also found that the choice of the head of the household was not based on any specific economic reasons, but on the general decision-making power and authority in the home.

These factors contribute to the farm workers being vulnerable to social, economic and emotional distress (London, 1999). This is reflected in specific psychosocial problems, for example, IPV, alcohol abuse by males and females, decaying family structures and a lack of family support (London, 1999; Mathews et al., 2008). Relational problems are particularly rife in such

communities, and these are reflected in the emotional, physical and psychological abuse and rape of women by their intimate partners (Boonzaier, 2003; London, 1999; Mathews et al., 2008; Waldman, 2006), placing 'Coloured' men at the forefront of perpetrating intimate spousal abuse nationally (Dunkle et al., 2004).

Alcohol was first used by the colonial powers to seize power as a form of economic, socio-cultural and political domination (Setlalentoa, Pisa, Thekisho, Ryke, & Loots Du, 2010). These authors' advocates that the 'dop' or tot system was used to gain such power over labourers in the Western Cape, and it went unchecked. Setlalentoa et al. (2010) further says that this system allowed farmers to use alcohol as a form of remuneration for farm workers at the end of a day's labour, or to supplement workers' wages with alcohol and that farm labourers also formed a market to which left-over wine could be sold. This practice led to racial stereotypes and inferences that the drinking behaviour of Coloured people is inherently biologically determined and not socially constructed (Setlalentoa et al., 2010). Although the South African government formally banned the 'dop' system in 1961, some farm owners continued its use. The after-effects of this system still impact on the lives of farm workers and their families (Setlalentoa et al., 2010).

According to Engelbrecht (2009), Christian religion also plays a dominant role in the research community. It is therefore likely that the men and women in this community adhere to traditional gender roles and that these, in turn, may inform the meaning they attach to and their construction of intimacy (Engelbrecht, 2009; Shefer et al., 2008).

The above general indicators provided a social backdrop to my exploration of intimacy expressions and constructions in this community.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **RESEARCH METHOD**

#### **5.1 Primary Research Objective**

The primary research objective was to explore understandings, expressions and experiences of intimacy in adult couples in committed relationships who live in one low-income, semi-rural, Western Cape Coloured community.

#### **5.2 A Qualitative Research Design**

As already indicated in chapter three, a qualitative research design was deemed appropriate for this study, since little research has been conducted on experiences of intimacy (including the range of intimacy experiences - not only sexual intimacy) in low-income, semi-rural Western Cape communities. The qualitative method involved conducting semi-structured interviews with male and female partners to explore how they experience intimacy and to gain insight into the experiences of the participants. Braun and Clark's (2006) thematic analysis method was used to analyse the data.



### 5.3 Method

#### 5.3.1 Sampling and participants

Laurenceau and Kleinman (2005) note that much intimacy and relationship research has focused on the individual as the unit of analysis and not enough have elicited both partners' perspectives. This study therefore utilised couples as participants. Most research on intimacy has also been conducted mainly with married couples (Abbey, 2004; Greeff & Malherbe, 2001) and couples who co-habited were excluded. In light of this, both married and co-habiting unmarried couples were included in this low-income Coloured semi-rural community. Snowball sampling was used to recruit participants who lived in the selected research community. Some primary advantages of snowball sampling according to Atkinson and Flint (2001) is that when a population is unknown and there is little known about it, snowball sampling can provide a better understanding and more complete depiction of a population. In addition, the sample can be produced quickly and cost-effectively. However, there are several challenges inherent in snowball sampling, primarily that snowball sampling is dependent on the subjective choices of the participants that were first accessed, and most snowball samples are unique and biased and do not therefore allow researchers to generalise findings. The quality of the data and in particular a selection bias that limits the validity of the sample are also affected (Atkinson & Flint, 2001). However, one of the goals of this study was to reach a particular set of participants, including those who may have been excluded from previous studies, and snowball sampling provided an effective means to do so.

- (i) Inclusion criteria were: Participants had to be older than 21 years of age, because the focus was on adult relationships;
- (ii) Participants had to be Afrikaans or English speaking;
- (iii) Participants had to live in the selected research community;
- (iv) Participants had to be in a committed relationship of at least two years' duration.

In order to give the reader as comprehensive a picture of the participants as possible, I present below the demographic and relationship status information of the participants as a group, followed by a description of each couple. The following table provides a comparative description of men and women regarding age, language, race, employment, household income and frequency of church attendance.

Table 5.1: Summary of General Demographic Information:

		Men	Women	Total Sample ( <i>n</i> =30)
Age	Mean	45	36.3	40.7
Age	Range	24-66 years	23-61 years	23-66 years
Mother tongue language	Afrikaans	15 (100%)	15 (100%)	30 (100%)
Race	Coloured	15 (100%)	15 (100%)	30 (100%)
Employment	Yes	8 (53.3%)	4 (26.8%)	12 (40.05%)
Employment	No	7 (46.7%)	11 (73.7%)	18 (60.2)
Household income per month in South African rands (ZAR)	Mean	R2973.00	R2385.00	R2679.00
Church going: (Yes)	Yes	15 (100%)	14 (93%)	29 (96.5%)
Church going: (No)	No	0 (0%)	1 (7%)	0.5 (3.5%)

The participants all self-identified as Coloured and their mother tongue was Afrikaans. The mean age of the men in the sample (45 years) was higher than that of the women (36.3 years). More men were employed than women, and twice as many men were full time employed than women. Women's work type ranged between unskilled (char work and seasonal work on the farms) and semi-skilled (factory workers), while men's work ranged from mostly semi-skilled work (security officer, truck driver, tractor driver on the farms) to skilled (boilermaker) work. Generally, the women in the study earned less money than the men. None of the participants had medical aid benefits as part of their remuneration packages. Some participants received disability grants and pensions that amounted to less than R19200.00 annually per person.

All thirty participants identified Christianity as their religion of affiliation and women attended church more often than men. No noteworthy differences were found between the educational attainment of men and women. Less than one third of all participants (30%,  $n = 10$ ) had at most a primary school education, while more than half (57%,  $n = 14$ ) reached high school. The highest educational qualification was held by a male and the lowest educational level was held by a female. However, three participants, one woman and two men had completed high school, and one male had completed tertiary education with a diploma.

Two thirds of participants (67%,  $n = 20$ ) lived in houses constructed of bricks, while 10% ( $n = 3$ ) lived in a small dwelling constructed with various materials in backyards of more formal homes. Another 23% ( $n = 7$ ) lived in prefabricated wooden structures (informally these as referred to as "Wendy houses"). Thirteen percent of couples' homes had electricity, but no bathroom. Almost half (46.7%) of the participants had no bathroom or running water, but were able to get electricity via an electric lead that was channelled from the main house to the demarcated area, the shack or wooden Wendy house in the backyard. Another 13.3 % had no electricity, bathroom nor running water in the house.

All thirty participants indicated that they were in a committed relationship with one current partner. No one indicated that they had more than one partner in their life. Forty percent of couples were married and the remaining 60% were cohabiting. Ninety-three percent of all participants said that they married, or will get married for love. It thus appears that committed intimate relations were based on sentiments of love, rather than economic or social concerns.

Most households comprised of the couple, their children, extended family such as parents, siblings and grandchildren, and/or the children of persons boarding in the house. It was also found that 67% of the households had three generations (grandparents, parents and children) of family members living in one house or on the same property.

Below, I provide a brief description of each couple. Please note that names starting with the same letter have been allocated to partners in relationship (e.g. Freddie and Freda) to make it easier to keep track of the couple units.

Couple 1: Avril (36) and Andre (42) had been co-habiting for 19 years. They lived in a small, demarcated room with two of their children, while their other two children lived and slept in another part of the house with his sister and her family. Avril was unemployed while Andre worked 3-4 days a week, and earned R1800 per month for the household.

Couple 2: Bella (25) and Benny (24) were cohabitating for 3 years, in a demarcated room, in his parents' dilapidated brick house, which consisted of one bedroom and kitchen. Bella moved here from a nearby town to live with Bennie and his parents. During the day Bella stayed home to help Bennie's mother do the daily cleaning and cooking, while Bennie worked on the farm in the vineyards and earned R1200 per month.

Couple 3: Both Cathy (60) and Carl (60) were on a government pension and each received R1050 per month with a total household income of R2100. Carl spent many years in jail for a crime that he committed. While in prison, his previous wife divorced him and he has been married to Cathy for the past 11 years. They lived in a shack in the backyard of her mother's brick house, and received electricity to their shack via an electric cable from her mother's house. They had no bathroom, water or toilet facilities. She was primarily responsible for the cleaning and cooking, but they also happily shared many of the household responsibilities.

Couple 4: Doris (42) and Daniel (43): Daniel was in prison and after his release; he met up with his childhood sweetheart, Doris. They were cohabitating in her deceased parents' dilapidated brick house. Doris received a disability grant of R1080 and did part-time hairdressing from home to substitute their household income, while Daniel was in a full-time position. He worked as a gardener on the farm and earned R2000 per month. Their total income was R3080. Doris and Daniel also supported their grandchild who was living with them, and was sleeping in their bedroom.

Couple 5: Edwina (26) and Eddie (30) were cohabitating in a room separated by a curtain in his parents' house. Three generations lived here, including Eddie's sister and her children. Edwina was unemployed, while Eddie worked on the farm on a part-time basis and on average 3 or 4 days a week as a general labourer, earning R2000. Edwina received a child support grant of R250, totalling their monthly income at R2250.

Couple 6: Freda (46) and Freddie (66) lived alone in a shack in the backyard of Freddie's friends abode. This was Freddie's second marriage as his first wife died. Freda stayed home to do the cooking and cleaning, but also did char work once a week and earns R680 per month, while Freddie worked fulltime on the farm attending to the farm gardens, earning R1500. Together their monthly income was R2180.

Couple 7: Gertruida (24) and Gerrie (42) have been cohabitating for three years. Due to a shortage of income and affordable housing, they were living with Gerrie's friend and his wife. Gerrie worked on a nearby farm, earning R2000 per month, while Gertruida was unemployed and stayed home. She was financially dependent on Gerrie and her contribution to the household was to help clean the house and to cook, while he was at work.

Couple 8: Henry (36) worked in the distillery and earned an income of R5000 per month, which increased my average monthly income of the males in this sample. Despite his higher income in comparison to the other participants, they stayed in a wooden wendy-house in the backyard of her grandparents' house. They have three children, one from his first marriage and two of their own. Hanlie (28) was unemployed at the time. The wendy house had one area, which they demarcated by the use of a curtain, into a bedroom and kitchen area. They had no running water, electricity, bathroom, or toilet, but electricity was lead to their wooden structure from the main house. The couple shared a bedroom with their children.

Couple 9: Iris (51) and Ivan (49) cohabitated for 19 years before they finally got married, which was 11 years ago. Their two adult children lived with them. The family consisted of their older son, his partner and their two children, plus their adult single daughter. Their house had no water, electricity or bathroom, but they accessed electricity from her mother who lived next to them. They had an outside toilet facility. Iris was the sole provider in the family and worked as a seamstress in a factory, while Ivan was unemployed. Iris earned R2800 per month.

Couple 10: Johanna (60) and Johannes (53) had been married for 20 years. Their adult daughter (20 years) and her boyfriend lived with them. Johanna was on pension and Johannes was drawing a disability grant. Their combined incomes from these grants were R1670. He was unable to work due to back injuries he incurred while working as a labourer on the farm. They lived in one of the dilapidated houses, which had no electricity, water, or toilet.

Couple 11: Karin (36) and Karel (39) were married for the last thirteen years. They had three children. Karen was the sole provider and worked in a factory, supporting her entire family on a monthly income of R4000. Karel was unemployed, but did seasonal work on the farm. They lived in a Wendy house in the backyard of her grandparents' old house.

Couple 12: Leonie (28) and Leon (24) were cohabitating for the past three years. They stayed in a room, in her parents' house. Other siblings and their children also stayed in the house. Both of them were unemployed at the time, but Leon worked on a casual basis on the farm and earned R2000 per month when he was working.

Couple 13: Mary (29) and Mark (28) were cohabitating for the past 13 years. Mark was a truck driver, but was unemployed at the time of the interview, while Mary was working fulltime as a seamstress in a clothing factory and earned R1750 a month and received a child support grant of R250. They had a child together, and they were living in a shack attached to his parents' house. They received electricity and water from the main house and they had no bathroom or kitchen facilities. They made use of an outside municipal toilet facility.

Couple 14: Noelien (36) and Noel (39) lived with Noelien's parents and sisters. They had been cohabiting for twenty years and had four children. Two of their children stayed with them and the other two stayed with his sister in Eerste River, because they did not have enough room in the house for the two older children. Noelien was unemployed at the time, while Noel worked as an electrician and earned R7000 per month. His income increased the monthly average of my male participants.

Couple 15: Olivia (25) and Okkie (24) were a young couple who were cohabitating for the past three years, in a room in her parents' house. They had a baby together. She was unemployed and stayed at home taking care of the couple's baby. He had a casual job as a shelf packer, and earned R2000 a month when he worked.

### 5.3.2 Data Collection Procedure

I was granted ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee at Stellenbosch University in February 2010. I commenced with the recruitment of participants when I attended a community fundraising event at the local primary school on Saturday afternoon the 8<sup>th</sup> of April 2010. Many farm workers whose children attended the school, as well as other residents of this semi-rural community, attended the event. At the event, I met a community worker who pointed out various couples to me. These couples were approached to get information about their availability to participate in the study and to get information about other possible couples. I was able to recruit four couples in this way. These couples were willing to participate and referred six other couples. Couples 10 and 11 accompanied couple three to their interview. These couples made it known to me that they would like to participate. I scheduled an interview time for each of the interested couples on a different day. Couples 12 and 13 were referred to the research by female 2. She gave me their cell phone numbers, which I used to determine their availability and to set up interviews with these couples. After her interview, female 4 gave the telephone numbers of couples 14 and 15 whom I phoned and recruited to be interviewed on a later date. I offered a R50 incentive for participation.

I also approached a community leader, one of the local pastors, to discuss the possibility of recruiting participants at his church. As negotiated and arranged with the pastor, I attended the church service on the 25<sup>th</sup> of April 2010. The pastor made an announcement that I would be approaching couples to participate in a study after the service and that couples who would like to participate should feel free to provide their details. On this particular Sunday morning, soup and bread were served at the church to the local congregation, and it provided me with an ideal opportunity to talk to, and recruit couples for the study. Seven couples indicated that they would like to participate. Names and telephone details were written down. Five of these couples were interviewed in the data collection process, while the other two couples could not be reached on their cell phones.



Upon meeting the couples and introducing myself, I first explained the objective of the research briefly and determined if the couple met the inclusion criteria. Couples who satisfied the criteria received a more detailed explanation of the research objectives, and were asked to participate in the research. Telephone numbers were collected from potential participants in order for me to arrange interview times. I also arranged with the community worker, whom I met at the school event, to remind couples to attend the interviews. For this purpose, with the permission of the volunteer couples, the names and details of the volunteer couples were given to the community worker. She was paid R25-00 for each couple she reminded about the interview and who arrived for the interview.

The data collection was conducted between June 2010 and January 2011. For reasons of privacy, safety and accessibility, participants were interviewed in a conveniently located church venue in the research community. Written informed consent was obtained and biographical data acquired before partners were interviewed on intimacy. Partners were interviewed separately, one directly after the other.

#### **5.3.2.1 Biographical questionnaire**

Before the interviews were conducted, biographical and relationship information was collected, by using a structured demographic and relationship history questionnaire (see Appendix B). Questions elicited bio-demographical data such as the participant's age, level of education, work status, financial status, number of children, type of dwelling/housing, the number of people residing in the dwelling/house, relationship status and characteristics, age and number of relationships and number of partners including current partner. Due to the low education level of the participants, they were asked if they preferred the questionnaire to be read to them, or whether they wished to read and fill it in themselves. All except two participants chose the former option. I then wrote the responses down or ticked the response boxes.

### 5.3.2.2 In-depth, semi-structured interviews

Each partner of the couple was interviewed individually to ensure that each partner could be as truthful as possible about their experiences in the relationship. Semi-structured interviews also provided participants with the opportunity to discuss issues that are important to them, and which the researcher has not anticipated (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Following a semi-structured format, the questions were asked in sequence, but I prompted for more information when necessary. A key characteristic of semi-structured interviews is it allows participants to respond to further probing questions, and to clarify issues that may be raised (Griffiths, 2009). I also used the technique of summarising to clarify what the participants were saying and to reflect it back to them. In doing so, both the interviewee and the interviewer jointly contribute to the generation of meaning. Each interview was between 90 minutes and 120 minutes in duration. Upon successful completion of both interviews, each partner received R50-00 as a gesture of appreciation for the couple's willingness to participate. All interviews were audio-taped and transcribed in full.

I interviewed both partners on the same day, as this completed the data collection for the couple and allowed me to gain a holistic view of the relationship. Partners who arrived together had the option of nominating who they wanted to be interviewed first. At the end of the interviews, participants were asked about their experience of the interview. In all cases, the participants responded positively, stating that they have had the opportunity to talk about their relationship to someone who was interested in hearing their story and who was not judgmental. Some felt relieved and others felt that the interview helped them to gain deeper insight into their relationship.

Doris (42, C) said:

*It just feel so nice to be able to talk to someone. It's not always that people come here that you can talk to. It feels good to talk to you, because it is seldom that you get positive conversation around here. One has to go look outside the community to find positive communication and one must appreciate it if someone comes to you to talk.*

Henry (36, C):

*I was very shy at first I was wondering hey what kind of questions are these, but I really enjoyed the time talking and answering the questions. It made me realise how big a role my parents played in my life and how I should not let them down.*

Johannes (53, M):

*I am always glad when people like you (researcher) comes, because I am not afraid to talk. I really like to talk about such things and to share my stories*

Karel (39, M):

*Yes, one must talk about these things. It will help me to think about the things we spoke about. It makes one think: "Why was that thing a problem?" Oh, I realise I have to work on certain stuff. I have to think about a lot of things in my relationship.*

Leonie (28, C):

*I am happy that I could talk to someone, because me and my sisters argue a lot in the house. He does talk to me, but sometime you just need somebody else to talk to. So yes. I enjoyed talking here today.*

## 5.4 Analysis of Data

The thematic analysis (TA) procedure of Braun and Clarke (2006) was applied to this huge amount of transcribed interview data (Braun & Clarke, 2013). TA is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2012, 2013). According to Braun and Clarke (2006) the following criticism is often raised with regards to TA: (i) It is perceived as lacking substance in comparison to more branded theoretically driven approaches (e.g. grounded theory or interpretative phenomenological analysis). (ii) It lacks guidance for higher level, more interpretative analysis. (iii) It does not provide distinct and concise guidelines which gives the impression that 'anything goes' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 78). (iv) Also, due to the focus on patterns across datasets, the voices of the individual participants may be lost, especially when working with a large data set. (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2013).

Braun and Clarke (2006; 2013) have developed a distinctive TA method that outlines a set of procedures that can be utilised as a method of analysis in the social science (Braun & Clarke, 2013). According to Braun and Clarke, their specific thematic analysis method addresses the criticism that is often levelled at thematic analysis: They argue that their method provides a clear demarcation of TA to ensure that others who use TA can make effective decisions about the particular form of analysis they are engaged in. They seek to honour the flexibility of the TA and provide a framework within which researchers can conduct thematic analysis in a theoretically and methodologically sound manner. Braun and Clarke (2006) aim to assist novice and experienced qualitative researchers to be clear about what they are doing and why, in order for them to give a step by step account of “how they did their analysis” in their written reports (p. 79).

As thematic analysis is a flexible method that can be used across theoretical frameworks, and to perform analyses on various levels, Braun and Clark (2013) state that it is important that the research’s theoretical framework and methods match what the researcher wants to know, and that they acknowledge these decisions, and recognise them as decisions. They provide guidelines about the decisions a researcher should consider and require the researcher to make her decisions explicit in the research report. Below I present each of these considerations and how I approached each in this study:

Firstly, epistemology: essentialist/realist versus constructionist thematic analysis: Thematic analysis can be conducted within both realist/essentialist and constructionist paradigms, with naturally different focuses and outcomes for each. In essence, the research epistemology guides what the researcher can say about the data, and informs how one theorises meaning. For example, with an essentialist/realist approach, one can theorise motivations, experience, and meaning in a straightforward way, because it assumes an unidirectional relationship between meaning and experience (Braun & Clarke 2006). In contrast, a constructionist perspective assumes meaning and experience are socially constructed and reproduced, and not inherently biological (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Therefore, thematic analysis seeks to theorise the sociocultural contexts, and structural conditions, that facilitate and inform the individual accounts that are provided. I conducted my

analysis within a constructionist paradigm, because this research is located within social constructionist theoretical framework.

Secondly, inductive versus theoretical thematic analysis: According to Braun and Clarke (2006), themes or patterns within data can be identified in one of two primary ways in thematic analysis: “in an inductive or ‘bottom up’ way, or in a theoretical or deductive or ‘top down’ way” (p. 83 ). An inductive approach means the themes identified are strongly linked to the data themselves, and bears some similarity to grounded theory. Inductive analysis is a process of coding the data without trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame, or the researcher’s analytic biases. In my study the thematic analysis was data-driven. However, Braun and Clarke (2006) cautions that researchers cannot completely free themselves of their theoretical and epistemological allegiances, and data are not coded in an epistemological vacuum.

A third decision revolves around the level at which themes are to be identified: at a semantic or explicit level, or at a latent or interpretative level (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A thematic analysis primarily focuses on one level. Utilising a semantic approach, the themes are identified within the explicit or surface meanings of the data. Here the researcher is not searching for anything beyond what a participant has said or what has been written. In contrast, the latent level of analysis goes beyond the semantic content of the data, and “starts to identify or examine the underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualizations /and ideologies /that are theorized as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. .84). In other words, in latent thematic analysis, the development of the themes themselves involves interpretation, and the analysis that is produced is not just description, but is also theorised. Ideally, the analytic process should entail a progress from description, where data have been organised and summarised to show patterns in semantic content, to interpretation, where the researcher attempts to theorise the consequence of the patterns and their broader meanings and implications, often in relation to previous literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that to be successful at the latent level the type of questions the researcher or analysis needs to ask is: ‘What does this mean?’ ‘What are the assumptions underpinning it?’ ‘What are the implications of this?’ ‘What conditions are likely to have given rise to it?’ ‘Why do people talk about this thing in this particular way (as opposed to

other ways)?’ and ‘What is the overall story the different themes reveal about the topic?’ (Braun & Clarke, p. 94). These sorts of questions should guide the more latent or interpretative analysis. In my analysis I attempted to include both descriptive and interpretive analysis.

A fourth aspect to consider is whether a rich description of the data set, or a detailed account of one particular aspect is aimed for. According to Braun & Clarke (2006) it is important to determine the type of analysis researchers want to do, and the claims they want to make in relation to the data set. For example, one might want to provide a rich thematic description of the entire data set, so that the reader gets a sense of the predominant or important themes. In this case, the themes that are identified, coded, and analysed needs to be an accurate account of the content of the entire data set. This might be a particularly useful method when investigating an under-researched area, or if you are working with participants whose views on the topic are not known. Alternatively, another use of thematic analysis is to provide a more detailed account of one particular theme, or group of themes, within the data. This might relate to a specific question or area of interest within the data (a semantic approach), or to a particular ‘latent’ theme across the whole or majority of the data set. As little is known about how people in poorer rural communities experience intimacy, the purpose of my explorative study was to code and analyse the entire data set to provide a rich thematic description of my data.

Fifthly, what is a theme or what counts as a theme? Since themes are core to thematic analysis, it is important to understand and to decide the demarcation or size of a theme before the start of the coding process (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A theme should encapsulate something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represent some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2013; 2014). Some may view prevalence across the entire data set as important. However, this is qualitative analysis, and there is no rigid answer to the question of what proportion of your data set needs to display evidence of the theme for it to be considered a theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A theme might be given considerable amount of space in some data items, and little or none in others, or it might appear in relatively little of the data set. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), it depends on the researcher’s judgement to determine what s/he considers a theme to be. For this reason, Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that the researcher needs

to retain some flexibility, and that rigid rules do not really apply. More importantly, a theme is dependent on whether it captures something important in relation to the overall research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2013).

Many times themes are selected on the basis of prevalence. For example, did a certain theme appear anywhere in each individual's interview? According to Braun and Clarke (2006) there is no right or wrong method for determining prevalence. An advantage of the flexibility of thematic analysis is that it allows the researcher to determine the prevalence of themes in a number of ways. What is important is the consistency of how one does this within any particular analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). There are various ways for representing prevalence in thematic analysis. For example, researchers may use the phrases: 'the majority of participants', 'many participants', or 'a number of participants' (Braun et al., 2003, p. 249). Such descriptors suggest a theme existed in the data, and the purpose is to convince the reader that the researcher is reporting unequivocally about the data. With regards to my own research, I focussed on themes that were more prevalent in terms of frequency across all the participants.

In conclusion, TA is a method that offers a way of identifying and providing a rich, detailed analysis of patterns across a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2013; Opperman, Braun, Clarke & Rogers, 2014). I mainly employed a descriptive form of TA that prioritises participants' experiences (Opperman et al., 2014). The analysis was theoretically underpinned by social constructionism, an approach that argues that people make sense of their own reality, and at the same time recognises that people's realities are shaped and mediated by language, history, culture, social and economic conditions. Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis involves a six phase process (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2013) that is explained below:

#### **5.4.1 Phase 1: familiarising oneself with your data**

The first phase of thematic analysis includes the transcriptions of the interviews. In order to conduct a thematic analysis the researcher first has to transcribe the audio-recordings of the interviews into a written form (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2013). Braun and Clarke (2006) advocate that even though the process of transcription may seem exasperating, time-consuming, and sometimes tedious, it assists the researcher to familiarise herself with the data. In accordance, I transcribed the first four interviews (i.e. of the first two couples), but found the amount of transcription too time consuming and employed a transcriber for the remaining interviews. However, I checked all interview transcriptions for precision by listening to the audio recordings, while reading the transcriptions, and where necessary, I made corrections. At times, pieces of information were lost because it was impossible to identify what the participant was saying; this was particularly true for Male 10 (Johan). Overall, I was satisfied with the quality of the transcriptions.

According to Braun and Clarke (2006; 2013), this first phase is about immersing oneself in the data. I was able to immerse myself into the data through repeated listening to the audio recordings, reading, rereading and correcting the transcripts (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Opperman, et al., 2014). Braun and Clarke (2006) also suggest that the researcher rereads data “actively, analytically and critically” by searching for meanings and patterns, by asking questions such as: How does the participant make sense of their experience of intimacy, what kind of intimate world is revealed through their accounts of intimacy? (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 205). In line with this suggestion, while reading through the individual interviews, I started searching for meanings and patterns and noted down interesting aspects of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2013). As meanings and patterns emerged I made annotations on the written interviews.



#### **5.4.2 Phase 2: generating initial codes**

This was an exploratory study informed by a social constructionist theoretical framework and I therefore used an inductive approach. In this bottom-up coding process my coding was derived from the data and depicted its descriptive elements. This is in line with social constructionist notions that advocate for researchers to investigate how participants make sense of their reality and not to impose theory or their presumptions on the research process.

Following familiarisation, and after all the annotations and field notes were written and included in the transcribed documents, these were subjected to the coding process (appendix D). The process of coding is part of analysis, and codes refer to “the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 88). A code can be any word, phrase or sentence that encapsulates the essence of “why the researcher thinks a particular bit of data may be useful” (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 207). As I had no preconceived codes or notions with which I approached the data, I coded all the material in each interview to produce a rich and comprehensive description of my participants’ accounts of intimacy. The aim of complete coding was to “identify anything and everything” that I thought was of importance, relevance and interest to answer my research question (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 206): How do men and women understand, express and experience intimacy?

Coding can be done manually or with a computerised software programme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The latter was chosen, and Atlas ti was employed to conduct a rigorous process of coding. Atlas ti is one of two computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS). These programmes (NVivo and Atlas ti) are widely used and allow researchers to code data and then to retrieve all coded data (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Coding with Atlas ti allows for each line to be analysed and the event taking place, is defined. Using this computer software programme Atlas ti, key ideas and words were coded within the transcripts in order to highlight interesting or significant experiences, events and happenings (Appendix D). Utilising Atlas ti also prevented me from skipping over important phrases, meanings or patterns, something Braun & Clarke (2006; 2013) strongly advise

researchers against, as they see coding of these important phrases and meanings as an important process that provides the foundation (Braun & Clarke, 2006) or building blocks (Braun & Clarke, 2013) for the rest of the analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) also suggest working systematically through the entire data set, giving maximum and the same attention to each data item, in order to identify interesting and meaningful aspects in the data items that may form the basis of repeated patterns (themes) across the data set. I also coded for as many potential themes/patterns as possible as I made allowance for codes that might be useful or interesting at a later stage, and to avoid content and context from being lost (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For this reason, it was important to me to retain all accounts using Atlas ti.

It is also important to note that the analysis of a single transcribed interview was coded before the researcher proceeded to another. This process was followed for each interview transcription, until the coding of all interviews was completed. According to Griffiths (2009), the coding method of analysis follows an idiographic approach, the focus is therefore on the individual as no two people are exactly the same and each person differs in heredity and their sequence of experiences. This also prevented the voices of the individuals from getting lost within the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Atlas ti allowed the researcher to keep record of her ideas, searches and analysis. A CAQDAS programme like Atlas ti makes qualitative analysis easier, more accurate, more transparent and more reliable (Gibb, 2007). As a researcher, I discovered that Atlas ti is not a computer programme that does the analysis for the researcher, but it provides a more critical, analytical, creative and flexible way through which I could enhance the outcome of my qualitative analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013). However, according to Gibbs (2007) one of the main disadvantages of using Atlas ti noted by researchers is that they feel more distant from their data than researchers using the paper and pen analysis, but improvements in the software has overcome this problem as researchers are able to go back and forth to their data (Gibbs, 2007).

### **5.4.3 Phase 3: searching for themes**

Once all the individual transcripts were initially annotated and coded in detail, the process of searching, identifying and selecting potential themes from the codes, based on patterned responses, commenced by grouping codes into what Atlas ti terms “families” (Griffiths, 2009). Following this process, I analysed the data across interviews, clustering the analysis around meanings and my research question (appendix E) (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2013; Opperman et al., 2014). I looked for themes within each couple’s two accounts, across couples, within each individual’s account, and across individuals’ accounts. Thereafter, I started thinking about the relationship between themes, and between different levels of themes (e.g., main overarching themes and sub-themes). All codes were then grouped into sub-themes and then sub-themes were grouped into overarching themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2013) or what Griffiths (2009) calls, master themes. Braun and Clarke (2006) acknowledge the active role that researchers play in searching, identifying patterns in the data, and selecting which themes are of interest. By using Atlas ti, I was also able to identify the themes and sub-themes across the whole data set (appendix F). This process of analysis involved a close and lengthy interaction between me and the text, with complete immersion in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The idea was to investigate what the themes revealed about how people make sense of their experiences of intimacy.

### **5.4.4 Phase 4: reviewing themes**

Utilising Atlas ti, I was able to develop themes which involved a process of refinement (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Refinement of the themes was an extremely tiresome process; after considering the long laundry list of themes (Appendixes E) for a period of weeks, and as descriptive ideas developed, the set of important themes was organised into a shorter list of common candidate themes (appendix F). With the assistance of Atlas ti, I was also able to get an idea of how the themes were related, and which themes needed to be collapsed or broken down into separate smaller sub-themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The different networks within the themes were additionally

investigated and became apparent, and I considered how data meaningfully cohered within themes and sub-themes (see appendix F).

After I was satisfied that my candidate themes adequately captured the coded data, I started the refinement process which involved a similar process, but in relation to the entire data set. At this level, I considered the validity of individual themes in relation to the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). At the end of this phase, I had a fairly good idea of my different themes, how they were linked, and the overall account these themes projected about the data.

#### **5.4.5 Phase 5: defining and naming themes**

According to Braun & Clarke (2006), phase 5 starts when the researcher has a satisfactory thematic outline of the data (see appendix E and F). At this point, I defined and refined the themes; in other words I identified the central point of each theme, and was now in a position to write a detailed analysis for each individual theme. I also considered how each theme fitted into the broader overall account that I was communicating about my data, in relation to my research question. Each theme was also considered in relation to the others. As part of the refinement process, I identified whether or not a theme contained any sub-themes. My sub-themes reflected the different meanings within the data. During this process it became essential to start thinking about the names for the themes and sub-themes in my final analysis to immediately give the reader a sense of what the theme was about (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

#### **5.4.6 Phase 6: producing the report**

According to Braun & Clarke (2006), phase 6 begins when the researcher has a set of fully worked-out themes, and this involves the final analysis and write-up of the report. Before the write-up, each stage of the analysis was reviewed by, and discussed with my supervisor who provided suggestions for possible directions for the subsequent analyses and write-up. This process included the reviewing of themes and recommendations were made as to which themes appeared to be most meaningful within the analysis. The final model was generated in collaboration with my supervisor to ensure that the final analysis represented the most significant themes, and that it was well-reasoned within the write-up.

All tables and figures were also written up to provide a further description and analysis of the participants' biographic data in order to provide a holistic overview of the participants' socio-cultural reality. The aim was to provide a rich description of the data regarding the lived reality of my participants, including their experience of intimacy and to convince the reader of the merit and validity of my analysis in a concise, coherent, and logical way. I also wanted to provide an interesting account of the story the data told within and across themes. I am convinced that my write-up provides detailed evidence of the themes within the data through the vivid examples, or extracts I chose to capture the essence of my participant stories (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

### **5.5 Trustworthiness of the Study**

To guide the analytical research process and to increase the trustworthiness of data, the following thematic analysis guidelines were adhered to:

- The questions used in the semi-structured interview were constructed in such a way that participants were able to tell their own stories (Braun & Clarke, 2013) in their own words and to allow me to ask further probing questions (Larkin & Thompson, 2012);

- I immersed myself in the data through repeated reading, and listening to the audio-material to the extent that I was familiar with the depth and breadth of the transcript content (Braun & Clarke, 2006);
- I applied a rigorous coding system using a qualitative computer analysis package Atlas ti to conduct coding of meaningful words, phrases, sentences and semantic and latent meanings;
- This allowed themes to emerge from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Using Atlas ti ensured that the choice of themes were not completely influenced by my subjective understandings alone, but that it represented the data adequately;
- During the coding process I aimed to produce rich descriptions, and the data were organised according to themes and sub-themes that expressed the participant's stories (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The relationships between themes were constantly considered and investigated (Braun & Clarke, 2013);
- Through a process of owning my own subjective perspective, I was aware of my personal beliefs, assumptions and theoretical orientation, and tried to stay reflexive about how my own perspectives and preconceptions may have influenced the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2013);
- The final model was generated in collaboration with my supervisor to ensure that the final descriptive, semantic, sometimes latent and social constructionist analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was well-represented in the write-up (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Lee et al., 2014).

## **5.6 The Role of the Researcher in the Data Collection Process**

As mentioned before, thematic analysis is an analytical process concerned with the detailed examination of the participants' experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012, 2013). Thematic analysis acknowledges that no analysis takes place within a void and that the researcher's background, histories, assumptions, values, mannerisms and epistemology perspectives may all influence the data collection and analysis process. The researcher's analysis and interpretations

therefore include aspects such as his/her understanding of theories, his/her knowledge, perceptions and/or reference systems (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013; Griffiths, 2009). Although a complete suspension of researcher influences is never possible nor desirable, the researcher is advised to make a conscious attempt to become aware of their biases and previous knowledge (Durr, 2008; Giorgi & Giorgi, 2004; Griffiths, 2009).

This type of awareness is called reflexivity. Braun and Clarke, (2013) postulate that reflexivity is an important aspect of good qualitative research. Reflexivity refers to the ability of the researcher to critically reflect on the knowledge we produce and our role in producing the knowledge (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Braun and Clarke distinguish two forms of reflexivity - functional and personal reflexivity. Functional reflexivity refers to the critical attention or awareness of the researcher concerning how the data collection tools may have influenced the research. For example the data collection tools such as interviews may influence the way participants related their stories (Braun & Clarke, 2013). I believe that being “Coloured” assisted me in readily establishing a comfortable relationship with participants. I felt that they were able to express themselves freely. For most parts of the interview, the participants spoke openly and with ease, and many laughs were shared in a relaxed atmosphere.

There were also times of discomfort, as on two occasions I did not know if it was appropriate for me to explore the prison life or reasons for imprisonment of two participants. They were both male and, from the information disclosed, I gathered that they had served jail sentences for many years and for serious crimes, namely rape and murder, respectively. Conducting a one-on-one interview in a secluded room in a church building exposed me to potential danger. For this reason, it did not feel safe for me to ask them about these events, and I refrained from probing into these aspects of their lives. It is also possible that my gender could have affected male participants’ responses regarding intimate topics such as sex or talking about their partner as some questions were very personal or sensitive. Men appeared to find it more difficult to discuss these sensitive topics with me than the women participants did.

Personal reflexivity involves acknowledging who we are as researchers and to acknowledge how our embodiment, in other words our physical bodies and what we do with them, can influence the knowledge we produce within research, or how our assumptions may influence knowledge production (Braun & Clarke, 2013). For this reason, the researcher needs to make his/her position in the analytical process explicit, and this transparency has the potential to enhance the reader's ability to make sense of this process, as well as the trustworthiness and validity of the analysis. Understanding the importance of personal reflexivity, as described above, I have considered how the relevant biographical details of my life may have influenced the research methodology, and how I may have influenced how my participants constructed their stories. I am a 48 year old woman. I grew up in a low-income, Coloured community in the Southern suburbs in the 1970's during the apartheid years. My childhood was turbulent and dominated by my father's alcohol abuse and emotional and physical absences. My mother, who did not drink alcohol, was particularly unhappy, frustrated and lonely in her relationship with my father, until her death in 2002 at the age of 59 years. In my own intimate relationships, I experienced breaks of trust and lack of emotional intimacy. These experiences therefore shaped my interest in intimate relationships, especially intimacy.

When listening to participants' stories, I realised that I shared several common experiences with some of them. I too suffered the effects of alcohol abuse in my parental home and I could identify with many of their hardships. It is therefore possible that my own experience of alcohol abuse in my parental home may have led to the emphasis that I have placed on the impact of alcohol on my participants' lives. I also empathised with the suffering of my female participants due to their partners' alcohol abuse. I felt touched by the circumstances of couples who really wanted to make their relationship work, but who did not have the means to afford decent housing or food or provide for their basic needs. I believe this was related to my own struggles as a Coloured woman who had suffered financial hardships as a child.



## 5.7 Ethical Considerations

The consideration of ethical issues is central to the research process, particularly if sensitive topics are addressed. It is important for research to be governed by certain principles to protect participants and to ensure that researchers do not abuse the powers with which they have been entrusted (Terre Blanche, Kelly & Durrheim, 2006). To ensure that this study adhered to ethical standards, ethical clearance was requested from the University of Stellenbosch's Ethical Committee. Key ethical considerations in this study are discussed in more detail below.

In accordance with Stellenbosch University's Ethical Committee's requirements all participants were given an information sheet to read prior to the interview (see Appendix A) and given the opportunity to ask questions or make comments before the interview started. Participants were also asked to initial a consent form (see Appendix A).

Confidentiality is central to developing a trusting relationship with participants (Griffiths, 2009). Due to the sensitive nature of the topic of intimacy, participants were assured that all information they would share would be kept strictly confidential. In particular, no information would be shared with the partner, as this was a concern for some individuals. I also ensured that the interviews were conducted in a comfortable, secure location, in a local church. The room in the church was private (i.e. no one close by to overhear the conversations). Interviews and biographical data were labelled with general headings, for example Female 1 and Male 1, instead of with participants' names or surnames to ensure anonymity (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009). Audio tapes of recorded interviews were also stored in a safe location after use, in order to protect the anonymity of participants and destroyed 6 months after use.

Participants were informed of their right to refuse to participate in the research and to withdraw at any stage. The researcher's name and contact details, as well as those of the research supervisor, were provided to participants. The telephone numbers of appropriate service providers, (e.g. Life

Line) were also given, in the event that participants became aware of problems or the need for help as a result of their participation in the study. Finally, participants were notified of the opportunity to schedule a feedback session with me after the completion of the study, at which the results of the research would be discussed with participants and any questions answered. None of the participants requested a feedback session.

The researcher is obliged to protect participants from physical, emotional and psychological harm (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009). In this study, participants were informed, prior to giving informed consent, that they had the right to refrain from answering questions if sensitive or painful memories and feelings were evoked. According to the requirements of Stellenbosch University's Research Committee, participants had a right to the written biographical questionnaire and the semi-structured interview being conducted in a language in which the participants were sufficiently proficient. All the research procedures were therefore conducted in the first language of the majority of people in the community.

Special consideration was given to the fact that most participants were from a semi-rural, low-income group, with mostly primary school education. Prospective participants were asked if they preferred the informed consent form to be read to them by the researcher, or whether they wished to read it themselves. In all cases, participants chose the former option. The researcher explained every point on the consent form to the participants.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **QUALITATIVE RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

In this chapter I present seven themes that I identified that best represent my participants' constructions and experiences of intimacy. Each of these themes will be presented below, discussed and integrated with the relevant literature. The critical issues that arise from this analysis will also be identified here, but discussed more comprehensively in chapter 7. The six common themes are:

- i) closeness means being and doing together;
- ii) sex is intimacy;
- iii) closeness through talking;
- iv) expressions and experiences of intimacy/closeness through acts of care;
- v) alcohol disrupts connection;
- vi) family of origin and constructions of intimacy; and
- vii) community constructions and norms.

As indicated in the methodology chapter (5.4), I used primarily a dyadic and secondarily an individual lens to explore how couples construct intimacy in their relationships. I therefore present couple quotes (i.e. quotes that include excerpts from both partners' interviews) as well as individual quotes to substantiate themes and subthemes. The quotes were translated from Afrikaans into English to increase the accessibility of the research. It is therefore possible that some of the colloquial meanings may have been lost in the translation. To maintain most of the colloquial meaning, the participants' responses were minimally edited.

The letters R (Researcher) and P (Participant) will be used to differentiate between the researcher's questions and participants' responses in longer quotations. My individual participants will be identified by a pseudonym, the name of their partner, age (46) and marital status: married (M) or co-habiting (C), e.g. Freddie (Freda's partner) (66, C). In the methodology chapter (see 5.4), a brief description of the couples was provided. In the coupled quotations, I will indicate the couple's pseudonyms, their age and relationship status. For example: Bennie (24, C).

### **6.1 Theme One: Closeness Means Sharing Everyday Activities**

During the interviews it became clear that my participants used the Afrikaans words "nabyheid" (which directly translates to the English word "closeness") and "saamwees" (which directly translates to the English word "togetherness") when they talked about intimacy in its broader sense. My participants understood the word intimacy itself to refer to sexual intimacy. This matches findings that suggest that intimacy is seen by many people as synonymous with sex (Little, McNulty & Russell, 2009; Schachner & Shaver, 2007; Vohs & Baumeister, 2004). When male and female partners were asked to narrate their intimate experiences, only one couple indicated that they did not experience closeness. All the other couples indicated that closeness to them meant togetherness. In their accounts of togetherness, both men and women emphasised the activity interactions they shared with their partners: These shared activities included the sharing of household tasks, as well as social, recreational and spiritual activities. Each of these will be explored in more detail below.

### 6.1.1 Household tasks

Both men and women spoke about closeness in terms of doing chores around the house together, such as cleaning the house, fetching water together, and washing the clothes.

Carl (60, M): *My time with her [Cathy] is very close and I enjoy it. We do the washing together, we do everything together. We cook jam together. She will cook it and I will do the peeling and add the sugar. [He says this with much love and pride in his voice.]* His wife Cathy (60, M) also highlighted that she and Carl shared many household activities and that this sharing was experienced as closeness: *“We do everything together [Cathy smiles when she talks about him]. We go fetch water together and he helps me to clean the kitchen and tidy the room in the morning.”*

Freda (46, M) indicated: *Closeness for me is when we go fetch the water together at the tap here next to the road or sometimes we fetch wood together. That time with him is very nice to me.* Fred confirmed that they did household chores together: *“We fetch water and wood together and I will sometimes help her make the bed.”*

Hanlie (28, C) also referred to the sharing of many household activities: *“We share a lot of things. He is very helpful over the weekends when he is home. Then he will help me clean the kitchen. He will wash the dishes or I will wash then he will dry them off.* Henry (36, M) confirmed: *“I help her. I will look after the children when she is busy in the kitchen or I will help her clean the kitchen when she washes the children.”*

Johanna (60, M) said: *“What I like about him is the fact that he really helps me a lot, especially in the house. Yes, with everything I ask him. Some mornings I can hardly do anything, but when I get up the kitchen is spotlessly clean. He will scour the pots and wash the mats.”* Johanna (60, M) appreciated the help her husband gave her. Johan (53, M) her husband, concurred that he cleaned

the kitchen, or tidied their room to help her. He said: *“I help her in the morning because she is not able to move around anymore. I also go to the shop to buy fruit and veg for the home.”*

This finding is in agreement with international research that indicates an association between the sharing of household activities and closeness. For example, Mitchell (2010) found that Canadian couples who shared household activities, such as washing dishes, yard work and cooking, reported higher average measures of happiness and relationship satisfaction than those who did not share such activities. Unhappy couples reported that they spend less time together, did not share common interests or activities and had competing interests (Mitchell, 2010). Mitchell (2010) also found that couples who shared household activities got along much better and were more compatible. In China and the United States, Anqi, Yuanting, and Amato (2011) found that sharing mutual household activities was positively related to relationship and marital happiness. Lips (2006) confirmed the positive effect of sharing household responsibilities on female partners as they felt more helped and supported, which minimised the experience of inequality.

When men and women spoke about household tasks they framed it as the man ‘helping’ the woman. This resonates with Ratele et al.’s (2014) article titled “‘We do not cook, we only assist them’: Constructions of hegemonic masculinity through gendered activity” in which they point out how boys constructed themselves as “grounded in bodily activities which they conceive of as definitive of masculinity” (Ratele et al., 2014, p. 559). According to Ratele et al. (2014) such embodied activities means that individuals allow and engage in conduct which is attached to, and expressed through the body to demonstrate gendered actions and positioning. My participants also perceived housework as women’s domain and men as magnanimous and admirable by “helping” with these tasks. Both men and women therefore appeared to collude in maintaining household tasks as women’s tasks. It also seemed that these gendered allocation of roles and responsibilities in this Coloured community were not actively contested, but instead were interwoven as part of their intimate relationship. This lack of contestation is also noted by Salo (2003) who found that women in Manenberg confined themselves to the domestic arena, spending their time completing household chores or caring for other household members.

### 6.1.2 Closeness in recreational and social activities

Couples said that they felt intimate when they participated in activities together, such as watching TV or movies and/or visiting family and friends, as highlighted in the quotations below:

Bennie (24, C) and Bella were able to find social and recreational intimacy when they watched TV or when they as a couple went fishing at the dam. Bennie said: *“Like I will take her to the Cine, coz she loves movies, and I like to be with her. It feels good to be with her.”* Bella (25, C) confirmed: *“We are also close when we watch TV or movies at home. We have a generator then him and me and his sister’s children can watch movies together. Sometimes we go to the dam. He will fish and I will just enjoy the time with him.”*

Daniel (43, C) said: *“I like to be together with her such as just to watch movies together. Other times we go to her friend in Eersterivier [a neighbourhood]. Other times when she wants to go to other places like going to town, or we will go to a friend’s place on a Friday night for a ‘braai’ [barbeque] and if she goes somewhere in the evening, then I will walk with her.”* Doris (42, C), confirmed that togetherness for her was to be home alone with him: *“I enjoy it when we are alone together then it is quiet at home. Then we watch movies or TV together. It makes me feel good that he is there and that we can do things together. The highlight of our relationship is when we visit friends and family. It makes me feel so good to know that he is with me.”*

Henry (36, M) indicated: *“It is just so nice for me when we can share things together that we both enjoy, like when we watch rugby together. I enjoy that we can decide together about things. Like last night I told her: ‘Let’s take the barbeque pan and grill and let’s go to your auntie’s place.’ So she said: ‘Yes that is a good suggestion, because we are just sitting here anyway.’ That’s when we went to her auntie’s place and we barbequed some meat there. Now such things I enjoy! The thing I like most about her is that she did not first like to watch sport, but if I am going to watch sport tonight then she will sit with me. When we watch rugby on Saturdays then she sits with me here in the room. She now shares everything with me; she comes to watch with me.”* Hanlie (28, C)

concurred and said: *“We like to go to his sister or to my family. We are always together. If we go to the shops we are always together - church, yes, everywhere we go. We never go without the other.”*

Implicit in their accounts was that there were not many recreational activities for couples in this community, and therefore many couples seemed to find intimacy in watching TV or movies together. They also tended to spend time playing card or board games with each other, or/and with their family members or people in the home. They said that they felt close to each other in these interactions as can be seen in the quotes below:

Andre and Avril, for example, said that they spent the biggest portion of their free time with his family watching TV, visiting, talking and/or braaiing [barbequing]. Avril (36, C) said: *“I enjoy doing things with him. It makes me feel close to him. We don’t have a TV so we like to play dominoes. We also get the children involved, so we can all play together. Yes, we also love to play cards or we play the snakes-and-ladders board game. We thoroughly enjoy it, especially at night and on weekends. It makes me feel good that we can spend time together like this. We rather enjoy the games and being together with the children.”* Andre (42, C) also enjoyed playing games with Avril and the children, and this was a highlight of their family relationships.

The accounts of Freddie (66, M) and Freda (46, M) also indicated that they felt close in sharing social activities with friends and family. Freda said: *“Other times we go to friends to ‘braai’ [barbeque], and then we play dominoes there. We do everything together; yes that is how we are.”* Freddie indicated: *“We do everything together. We play dominoes with our friends at their house. Then we enjoy the playing with them ’till ‘ou nag’ [late in the evening].”*

Ivan (49, M) said: *“We play dominoes together, that’s now me, her and the children. The best thing for me is when the family is together, me and her with the children. Then I feel happy. That is the best time for me; with my family I am very, very happy when I am with my family, because my family is very important to me.”* Iris (51, M) confirmed: *“Oh, we do a number of things together, but mainly with the children, because they still live with us in the house. We play dominoes when*



*they feel like it. We like to play together with children. Sometimes their friends come and we will include them too. During summer we play a lot of domino games. Then I will bake a cake and we'll share it amongst us. Someone might bring beer then they will drink their beer and they will play 'til late night."*

Going shopping was mentioned mostly by women as a highlight and a special shared activity during which they experienced closeness with their male partners.

Hanlie (28, C): *"I feel close to him when we do things together like when we have money we go to the shops to do shopping for the children. When we go to the shops we are always together."*

Gertruida (24, C): *"Sometimes when he has money then we go to Bellville, or to town. We'll go shopping or just walk around."*

Noelien (28, C): *"We like to go out together like to the shops to buy clothing for us and the children. That is when we are together and close."*

The above quotations highlighted that even though there were very limited organised recreational and social activities for couples in their immediate vicinity/community, couples created and engaged in activities that fostered a sense of togetherness. Couples primarily engaged in activities that required little financial expense. For example, those who had television sets watched television or videos together or played card games or dominoes. When they had some money, they went shopping together.

Many of these social activities created social support networks with family and friends. It also promoted feelings of closeness because it reinforced the identity of partners as a couple (Kearns & Leonard, 2004; Mattingly & Bianchi, 2003; Sullivan, Pasch, Johnson and Bradbury Wrzus, Hanel, Wagner & Neyer, 2013). Research indicates that spouses who maintain shared social and family networks with mutual friends and family have more stable and satisfying relationships than those

who maintain separate networks. Romantic partners are less likely to break up when they interacted more often with their partner's friends and family (Kearns & Leonard, 2004). My finding that couples' social and recreational activities often take place within immediate and extended family contexts coincides with findings by Ketokivi (2012). Ketokivi (2012) also found that lower-income couples typically socialise with family, but couples in this low-income Coloured community indicated that they socialised with both family and friends.

### 6.1.3 Spiritual intimacy

Some couples emphasised that sharing spiritual or religious activities enhanced closeness in their relationships.

Carl (60, M), Cathy's partner said: *"Religion is very important to both of us; it has a very good effect on our relationship. Like tomorrow, it is the sisters' prayer meeting. Now I have asked her where it is going to be. Now when she goes, I will go with her; I will walk with her to the church gate. God is important in our relationship. You see when a man and a wife have a problem and they are converted then they can go on their knees together, pray about issues, and leave it in God's hands. Then after that you feel happy, free and a peace with each other."*

Cathy (60, M) said: *"Our most enjoyable time together is when we go to church and prayer meetings together. To go to church is very important to us. The church teaches us to love each other every day and that we should never leave each other, because the Lord says what He has joined, no man must separate. At night when the news is finish then I take the Bible and reads it at night or after they have watched TV with their family."*

Both Henry (36, M) and Hanlie (28, C), came from strict religious backgrounds. Daily religious rituals were important to them. Henry (36, M) values his interaction with his wife and said: *"She*

*and I pray together in the morning while the two children sleep. Now that is what I appreciate about her and what makes us close. I can talk to her about God.” Hanlie (28, C) reiterated the closeness they experienced through spiritual activities by saying: “It brings us closer together, because everything we do, we first ask God... yes, in everything we do. The plans that we have, we want to buy a house; we first give our plans over to God. My husband is also very much involved in the church and he believes in his religion. One thing about him, he always prays for me and for the family and it makes me feel that we are one.”*

Both Iris (51, M) and Ivan (49, M) believed in daily Bible reading and prayer in the evenings. In the household, the two took turns praying at night. The ritual of praying together assisted them in feeling close to each other. He admired and appreciated her as a religious woman. Iris (51, M) said: *“Every night we read the Bible and pray together. Most of the times I pray then he will just say Amen, but other times he will also pray. Now that feels good to me, just to know that he still believes in God and that he is there praying with me.”* Ivan (49, M) also valued the time in the evening when he and his wife prayed together: *“One thing about my wife she always prays and reads her Bible.”*

Women in the study seemed to seek a spiritual sharing and connection with their partner more than the other way around.

Doris (42, C), Daniel’s partner, said that as a child she was taught that the church must be central in your house, as it created an atmosphere of praise and prayer in the house. She believed this would make one successful in one’s relationship. She desperately sought spiritual closeness with him; and wanted him to go to church with her: *“Church must be central in your house; without having religious activities in your home; your house is not a home. Because then you can pray, read your Bible and have a home church. If you do then you can be successful in all your endeavours. I feel, but he is very stubborn, he has not been in church for a long time, while I have been in the Church since I was a child. I am still trying to get him to go with me to church, but if he is drunk then I cannot ask him. Then he gets very upset with me and then he will say: “You know what? You make*

*me so angry I will slap [hit].... you.”[He threatens to hit her]”* Daniel (43, C) admitted that he only went to church once with her, and acknowledged that he needed to improve in this area. For him church was a place to go to for an event, not necessarily something to improve the relationship.

Johanna (Johan’s partner) (60, M) said: *“Those years he was so in the bottle, he drank a lot. I so much wanted us to go to church together, but I had to go alone. I was very much involved in the church, me and my child, because he was drunk most weekends.”* Johan (53, M) admitted that he did not really go to church, maybe once a year, but that was all. He deemed church as important as he encouraged his daughter and her partner to go to church if they wanted to get married or if they wanted their child to be baptised.

Religion played an important role in Karen’s life and she yearned to share it with Karel as she said: *“I want him to go to church with me or just do prayers at the table with me and the children, but I am still trying to get him committed.”* Her need for him to go with her and to participate in instructing the children in a religious way and to commit his ways to God, was not met, and in her mind the absence in religious commitment on his side made her feel dissatisfaction. Karel (39, M) claimed that sometimes he did go with her to church, but he said that he did not always feel that he fitted in, as there were only females at church. *“I know she wants me to go to church with her, but I do not feel like it. I know it will make her happy. The last time she wanted me to go camping with her church group, but I said to her that there are only women in the church.”*

Other male partners also confirmed that it was mainly their female partner, who went to church, prayed, or who initiated Bible study in the home.

Ivan (Iris’s partner) (49, M) said: *“One thing about my wife she always prays and reads her Bible. I’m not really a religious person, but if she asks me to go to church with her, I will go, otherwise I won’t go on my own.”*

Johan (Johanna's partner) (53, M) also said: *"She was and is a good wife. She normally went alone to church, she and the child, but I will only go once a year."*

Women could thus be seen as the spiritual leaders in many of the couples in this study, while many men were reluctant to go to church and expressed little need for spiritual intimacy with their partner. Some male partners also looked more favourably on their female partners who attended church, viewing such attendance as the mark of a good, virtuous, or trustworthy woman. In couples where the female partner perceived the male partner as belonging to a religion (Christianity), the couple experienced significantly higher spiritual closeness compared to couples in which the female partner perceived the male partner as not belonging in, or going with her to church. Engelbrecht's (2009) findings regarding couples in this same community were similar. Female partners felt the absence of spiritual closeness more than men did. Thus, men's religious participation influenced spiritual closeness for women.

Couples presented a range of religious involvement and activity: From Leon (24, C) and Leonie (28, C) who belonged to a church grouping, but did not practice religion, to Henry (36, M) and Hanlie (28, C) who both seemed to have a strong faith and practiced daily religious rituals. Joint religious activities seemed to enhance relationship closeness in several ways. For instance, they entailed opportunities for partners to participate in enjoyable or meaningful rituals together, discuss and develop a set of shared values, and provide each other with support, particularly about spiritual, religious, and moral issues. The shared spiritual experiences also seemed to unite them in their attitudes and goals in their relationships. Christian worship and practices, e.g. praying and reading the Bible together seemed to contribute to couples feeling closer, a relationship that has been well-established in previous research (Hünler & Gençöz, 2005; Marks, 2005; Mitchell, 2010; Reeves, Beazley & Adams, 2011). These findings also correspond with Bagarozzi's (2001) description of spiritual intimacy, which involves sharing religious beliefs and observing religious practices together, such as praying and attending church. Engelbrecht (2009) also found that joint religious activities, such as going to church together and praying, were associated with higher marital satisfaction amongst Coloured couples of the same research community as my participants. Thus, it is likely that religious couples in this community may experience higher levels of togetherness and lower levels of marital unhappiness.

## 6.2 Theme Two: Sex and intimacy

### 6.2.1 Sex as the most intimate experience

Many partners indicated that they experienced sexual interaction with their partner as the most intimate experience. Bella (25, C) said: *“Sex is very intimate... It’s like we are one, and it feels like we become one person.”* Bennie (24, C), her partner, also felt the same way, as he indicated: *“Being with her sexually, makes me feel that she is the right person in my life, and I feel happy and blessed in those moments of sexual togetherness.”*

Freda (46, M) indicated: *“I am close to him when we have sex.”* Freddie (66, M) also indicated that sex was a time of closeness for them when he said: *“We have sex once or twice a week and once over weekends. During that time I feel very close to her. I feel happy and excited to be with her.”*

Getruida (24, C): *“When we have sex it makes me feel even closer to him. I enjoy feeling like that. It is fantastic to feel like that. Just the mere fact that he is now with me... like we would lay in bed and then we do it [have sex], then I can really feel he is with me.”* In addition, Gerrie (42, C) said: *“I think sex was the closest thing that I experienced with her. You see... we do many things together, but I would say.... I feel closest when we have sex. Yes... that is when I feel very close to her!”*

Individuals in other couples also indicated that sex meant closeness to them, as indicated below:

Ivan (Iris’s partner) (49, M):

*“I experience closeness with her when we have sex, and I find it very satisfying.”*

Johan (Johanna’s partner) (53, M):

*“I feel close to her when we go to bed together [have sex].”*

Leon (Leonie's partner) (24, C)

*"When we have sex, I feel very close to her, that is when I know she loves me."*

Mark (Mary's partner) (29, C)

*"When she lays in my arms and when we have sex, then I feel completely close to her."*

### **6.2.2 Women emphasised emotional connection in sex**

Compared to the men, more women emphasised the emotional connection they felt with their partner during sex. Women also seemed to use more expressive language when they talked about sex with their partners. Bella (25, C) mentioned feelings of intimacy, excitement and happiness as she said: *"To me it feels like.... it is very intimate... It's like we are one, and it feels like we become one person. The movements... everything is like one! So I enjoy the feelings of intimacy I get from sex."* She also described how they experimented with a variety of sexual activities, and framed it as *"So, I think we do things to still get closer to each other"*. Although her partner Bennie (24, C) also said that he experienced love, especially in their post-coital moments of lying together, holding each other and talking, he did not emphasise the emotional connection as eloquently as Bella did.

Cathy (60, M) said: *"Yes then we are intimate with the kissing and that is how the feelings of love between us start to blossom. This involves sex too. I enjoy sex with him. Then I feel the heat rising in me, and I feel I love him more and more, and we make time for it! Yes we do. We would caress each other; then we are loving towards each other. He can see I want to be intimate, because the heat rises between us. That is when we kiss and touch each other."* Carl (60, M) did not talk much about sex or emotions during sex; instead, he veered towards a moral tone and took care to highlight that women should not be seen as sex objects: *"Women are important; they are not just sex objects. It is not just about sex, and my sex with her is once every week."*

Freda (46, M) said: *“If I can be honest with you the thing I enjoy most with him is the sex, and also when we lay in each other’s arms and he holds me tight, the feeling is there. I can feel the love is there. Yes it is definitely love.”* Freddie (66, M), however, highlighted the pleasure of sex: *“We enjoy sex a lot. For me sex is exciting and satisfying.”*

Gertruida (24, C) said: *“When we have sex it makes me feel even closer to him. I enjoy feeling like that. It is fantastic to feel like that. ... like we would lay in bed and then we do it [have sex], then I can really feel he is with me and that he loves me.”* Gerrie (42, C), however, did not speak of sex as a manifestation of his love for Gertruida, but sex as demonstrating her love for him. He spoke in quite a depersonalized way: *“Sex plays an important role because it is a way women show their love to you.”*

The abovementioned finding of women emphasising the emotional connection they feel with their partner during sex is in agreement with the scholarly work of Winstead, Derlega and Rose (1997), who found that emotions such as love are closely linked to experiences of sexual intimacy for women. Research has also found that women tend to narrate their sexual experiences within a romantic narrative, which means that women tend to use emotional vocabulary (Burn, 2000; Gawda, 2008; Milnes, 2004). Furthermore, Everaerd, Both and Laan (2006) report that women feel more varied intimate emotions than men during sex. The latter authors also conclude that women's evaluation of their sexual experience is more elaborate, compared to men's and, consequently, that women generate more meaning around their experiences of sex. Similarly, Durr (2008) also mentions that women generally emphasise the emotional aspects of sexuality, and display a tendency to focus on the quality of the relationship, of which sexual activity is only one part. When consideration, warmth and physical demonstrations of love are present in a relationship, this enhances women's sexual feelings (Durr, 2008). Feminists argue that women are socialised to understand their sexuality in this way. For example, Milestone and Meyer (2013) state that hegemonic ideologies of femininity in Western contexts views female sexuality as “deeply bound up with emotions, relationships and commitment rather than purely bodily pleasure” (p. 21). The female participants' greater emotional expressiveness regarding sex may also be related to this socialisation.



Although a few men, such as Bennie, Eddie and Gerrie discussed their sexual experience openly and without much discomfort, most of the other men (such as Daniel, Johan, Ivan, Leon, Noel, tended to provide brief factual information or avoided the topic of sex. The men's non-verbal gestures indicated their unease with the subject: they shuffled around uncomfortably on the chair, giggling with embarrassment or trying to hide this embarrassment by looking down or laughing.

Some men also used indirect language; for example, both Andre and Eddie used travel metaphors when they talked about sex.

Andre (Avril's partner) (42, C):

*"I wanted to go to 'Cape Town', but she did not want to go, so I got angry with her, so I turned my back."*

*R: "What did you want to go do in Cape Town" [The researcher does not understand the colloquial jargon around sex.]*

*P: "Cape Town, man! That other stuff [sex]! We call it going to Cape Town. "*

*R: [Researcher laughs when realising the colloquial meaning.] "And what other words do you use when you want to talk about sex?"*

*P: "Oh my word!" [Shy and uncomfortable... giggles along] "We call... also call it 'going to the lights'. Those are the only two I know!" [Laughs]*

Eddie (Edwina's partner) (30, C):

*"When I am home or when we are early in bed then we can't get together ["bymekaarraak" meaning "have sex"]. "Then I would play with her and the child on the bed and then it just happens. That is when we go to Woodstock!"*

### 6.2.3 Marriage as the ideal context for sexual activity

Co-habiting partners felt that sex outside marriage was immoral and they desired to get married.

Bella (25, C) (Bennie's partner) said: *"When a man and woman are intimate [have sex], then it is wrong, it is sin, but when you are married, the married life, then it is something beautiful. I do not take Holy Communion because I feel I'm living in sin."* However, Bennie did not indicate that he felt that sex outside marriage was wrong and did not seem to share Bella's view.

When asked about closeness, Doris (42, C) interpreted the question as asking about her sexual activity. She responded by saying that she wanted to be married and that she did not like living together, implying that she was uncomfortable talking about her sexual activity as she saw it as something 'wrong' outside the boundaries of marriage. According to her, sexual intimacy belonged in a loving marital relationship and she said: *"My desire is to get married. I am not happy with this living together story. That is why I want to get married as soon as possible, because it is not healthy or morally right. My parents were married and all my sisters are married; it's only me... that is why I want to get married."* For Daniel (43, C), it was enough that he loved Doris, and he did not see marriage as a prerequisite for marriage: *"When you love someone you are free to enjoy sex with them."*

Eddie (30, C) and Gerrie (42, C) also indicated that they felt that they wanted to do what they perceived as being the moral thing, namely to get married. Eddie, Edwina's (30, C) partner said: *"I don't want to live like this forever; I want to do the right thing. I want to put a ring on her finger. Not a plastic ring, a real one. I want her to be mine, so we can be together, she, me and the child. I love her very much. I really don't know what I would do, if she should take another man. I will go crazy; we are meant to be together."*

Gerrie (42, C), Getruida (24, C)'s partner also referred to the moral of marriage: *"Getting married is the right thing to do. People always say it is not right to live together. That is why I want to get married; one cannot live like this."*

The expectations of the church and community members could clearly be heard in the participants' motivations for marriage. Within the church, heterosexual marriage is validated as the only acceptable context for sexual intercourse. Thus, the dominant discourse in the above quotations was that sex outside marriage is wrong, and that sexual intimacy belonged in a loving marital relationship. The prominence of this discourse can be attributed to the importance of Christian beliefs in this community, as described by Furphy (2011). According to such Christian beliefs, sex belongs in marriage and males and females should be sexually abstinent until marriage (McClain, 2006). This type of ideology creates feelings of guilt in some of the female and also some male participants regarding engaging freely in sexual intercourse. Similarly, findings from an earlier study by Furphy (2011) in the same Coloured community found that sexual intimacy out of wedlock conflicts with the teachings and Christian faith of participants in this community, making it difficult for participants to talk about or engage in sexual activity without being 'bad' Christians or contradicting their Christian beliefs.

Despite their beliefs and professed desire to have sex within the context of marriage, many of the couples were not married. Several couples co-habited, some for more than 19 years. This practice may seem to contradict their discourse about the desirability of marriage. Interestingly, Edin and Reed (2005) also found that despite marriage aspirations remaining high in both poorer and more affluent North American communities, marriage rates are on the decline amongst the poorer communities. Edin and Reed (2005) postulate that one reason for the discrepancy between marital aspirations and actual marriage is the tendency of participants to answer according to the social norms, i.e. social desirability bias. Thus, it is possible that my participant couples' discourse of marriage as the ideal context for sex had to do with presenting themselves as decent people to the middle-class researcher. This also corresponds with findings from Salo (2003) who found that it is very important for Coloured people in the urban community of Manenberg to be acknowledged as decent people who come from a 'good' or moral home. On the other hand, the increasing number

of cohabiting couples may also reflect the notion that cohabitation and premarital sex has become more acceptable in this community and other poorer communities in the USA (Edin & Reed, 2005).

Another reason for the discrepancy between marriage aspirations and actual married status is related to financial affordability as many couples indicated that money plays a role in getting married. For example, they referred to not having money for a decent ring or wedding event. This concurs with Edin and Reed (2005) who found that disadvantaged couples' beliefs about what constitutes marriage may pose a barrier for many disadvantaged couples. According to Gibson-Davis, Edin & McLanahan (2005) widespread cultural changes have produced standards and expectations for marriage and weddings across different cultures in the USA that low-income people find difficult to meet. Financial means is an important prerequisite for achieving these standards and the desired married lifestyle. For my research participants, the ideal lifestyle was related to have a home of their own, or a place to stay, affording their wedding event or to buy a ring. Ironically, therefore, my participants co-habitation may be due to their high standards or expectations regarding weddings and married lifestyles.

Through their narratives, participants also reflected community expectations, as indicated below:

Gerrie (52, C): *"People always say it is not right to live together."*

Mark (29, C): *"People would ask: you two are so long together, why don't you get married?"*

It seemed that the participants were very aware of the expectations and norms of the community and they generally desired to adhere to these. This is agreement with Salo's (2003) finding that it was important for the urban Coloured community in her study to be associated with morality, respectability and 'coming from a good household with morals', in order to silence community gossip and to earn individuals the right to be respected as worthy persons. This need to be seen as a worthy and respectable person is also likely related to the historical context of Coloured people. During the colonial and apartheid years, Coloured women were associated with degradation,

immorality, and undisciplined sexuality commonly associated with ‘racial impurity’. Coloured men were seen as promiscuous, thieving, drunken, amoral, emasculated and unable to support a family (Wildschut, 2005). These stereotypes are still active and many Coloured people want to distance themselves from such stereotypes (Adhikari, 2005).

#### **6.2.4 The importance of monogamy and fidelity**

Both men and women raised the issue of sexual fidelity and that a partner’s fidelity was valued.

Bella (25, C), for example, said: *“I feel I can enjoy myself with him, because he does not sleep with other women”*, while Bennie (24, C) indicated: *“In this community men can do what they want and they can sleep with other women as they please.”* He also indicated that in the past he sometimes accused Bella of sleeping with her old boyfriend and then argued with her when he was drunk.

Iris (51, M) dreaded the idea that her husband would be unfaithful to her: *“The worst is when a man is unfaithful, that’s the worst! That is what I see happening around me, but it has not happened to me yet. It cannot happen!”* Ivan (49, M) also said: *“My wife will never cheat on me, she tells me everything. That is one thing about her, she won’t do thing like that, she is a good woman... I do not think she will cheat on me and I dare not cheat on her as she will hurt the other woman involved.”*

Gerrie (42, C) also stressed that fidelity and loyalty are important to him. He makes this clear when he said: *“I never want to cheat to her as my father cheated on my mother.”* Of his partner Gertruida, he said: *“She is a good woman and lady. Every man desires a woman that is not a loose woman who does not sleep around.”* Gertruida (24, C) confirmed Gerrie’s impression of her. She said that she almost cheated on him once, but that she decided against it: *“I don’t know what it was about the guy, but I almost cheated. I thought of him who is sitting and waiting for me at home and decided I can’t do such things like cheating on him.”*

Avril, Andre (42, C)'s partner, said that she felt special because Andre (42, C) did not cheat on her: *"I am happy I did not choose the wrong person, somebody that would go around and sleep around with other women. This makes me feel that I love him more and more."* Andre said that there are numerous fights about infidelity in the community. He says he detests infidelity: *"I don't like unfaithfulness, it is pure dirty and immoral."*

Eddie (Edwina's partner) (30, C) said: *"When we have sex that is when I feel she loves me, then I am convinced she won't cheat on me. Now that is what I like about her. She is not such a girl that will f\*\*\* me around."* Meanwhile, Hanlie (28, C) said: *"I enjoy having sex with him and I know he will not cheat on me. I can trust him. I do not think he will do a thing like that."*

From the above quotations, it is evident that participants perceived infidelity to be common in their community. Sawyer-Kurian et al's. (2010) research also found that the Coloured men in her study often had multiple sexual partners. In the present study, however, most of the couples and most of the men indicated that they were monogamous.

These men would thus seem to be exceptions to the roving men in the community described by the quotations below:

Andre (42, C): *"I get angry with all this sleeping around in this community. Several times the men wanted to beat me up, because I squealed on them. No, I don't like this dirty behaviour! It's disgusting."*

Doris (42, C): *"The men and women go to the shebeen. There they normally get drunk and sleep with different partners."*

Karel (39, M): *“When I was young I had various sexual partners and earlier in my marriage I also slept with other women, but now I do not do those things anymore.”*

In the quotations above, monogamy seems to be a challenge for many men in this community. For this reason, women did not take men’s monogamy for granted and dreaded the possibility of their male partner being unfaithful to them. Some women also mentioned that they felt special or privileged that their partner was committed to them. The concept of a ‘special’ woman is mentioned by Sawyer-Kurian et al (2010) who found that men indicated that they would be monogamous if they found that ‘special’ woman. Similarly, monogamous men in this study also valued a virtuous, good or ‘special’ woman. According to Froyum (2010), virtuous or ‘good’ women in Black communities in the USA, establish their positive reputations and valued their sense of self by projecting sexual innocence and control, which is attractive and pleasing to males. Coloured men in Cape Town described their version of a ‘special’ woman as one who is “communicative, honest, drug-free, working and has high self-esteem and pride in herself” (Sawyer-Kurian, et al., 2010, p. 21). Men were likely to commit to monogamy once they found a ‘special’ woman.

Three couples indicated that they had experienced infidelity in their relationships. In all cases, the male partners were sexually unfaithful.

Iris described her husband’s infidelity as follows:

Iris (51, M) said: *“When I met him, he was very bad and immoral. Early in our relationship I caught him with a slut in the bush having sex, so I beat him. But since we got married 11 years ago he didn’t do it again.”*

Karel (39, M) admitted to cheating on Karen (36, M) when he said: *“I cheated on my wife with other women when we were still newly married. I used to tell her all sorts of stories. This made me feel guilty, but it also makes one feel that the woman you married is worthless.”* Karen (36, M) indicated the pain and distance that she was still experiencing because of Karel’s lies and infidelity:

*“When he got involved with another woman; that was the lowest point in the relationship. I felt deceived and could not believe it, because the woman was an alcoholic. That is why I do not trust him. I will never trust him again. My body is in that constant mode that something is wrong in the relationship; it needs to be fixed, before I can be intimate with him. When we have sex all I can think of is all the unresolved problems we have and I just cannot give myself to him. Maybe one day if we resolve some of the issues, then maybe I can be more relaxed, or enjoy sex or whatever, but now I cannot.”*

Infidelity also threatened the closeness of Mark (29, C) and Mary (28, C). Mark admitted that he had an extramarital affair and because of this, Mary did not trust him completely and felt insecure about the future of their relationship. Mary (28, C) also mentioned the fact that in the past, Mark would disappear and indicated that there were other women in his life, which hurt her deeply: *“He would come back to me after being with other women, with no apologies and then expected me to take him back. That is why I do not always know if he loves me. He has hurt me so much and if it were not for his mother who encourages me to stay, I would have been gone long time ago. He just confuses me.”* Mark admitted that he was unfaithful to Mary, and he recognised that this affected her very negatively, but said that he wouldn’t cheat on her again.

Three men (Ivan, Karel, Mark) additionally indicated that they were guilty of infidelity, and the majority of participants in the present study made some reference to a ‘double standard’ regarding sexual behaviour in the community. Bennie (24, C), for example, noted: *“Men can do as they please, but not women”*.

For this reason, attempts were made to investigate underlying societal influences on infidelity. I discovered that not much research has been conducted on the extra-dyadic patterns of men and women in Coloured communities. It is, however, known that alcohol drinking is especially pervasive in the Western Cape province in South Africa. This leads to risky sexual behaviour, infidelity and sexual violence against women in many disadvantaged Coloured communities (Abrahams et al., 2004; Jewkes et al., 2003; Sawyer-Kurian et al., 2010). The Coloured men in



Sawyer-Kurian et al.'s (2010) study admitted that they get 'horny' when they are under the influence of alcohol and may rape a woman if she refuses sex in these circumstances. These men also reported that they often have extra-dyadic sexual relations with women other than their main partner, and that the main venue to find a casual sexual partner is at a shebeen (Sawyer-Kurian, et al., 2010). They described these casual partners as one-night stands, "loslappies" [loose woman], spare wheels, sluts or bitches. Men's alcohol-related activities and infidelity therefore seem linked, and could explain why more men than women in this community tend to commit infidelity.

Gerrie (42, C) indicated that his father cheated on his mother and that sometimes his father took him with him when he visited his extramarital girlfriends, which indicates that older men may model infidelity to younger boys. Sawyer-Kurian, et al. (2010) found that some Coloured men felt that the notion of having multiple partners was learned from their peers and they were unaware of anyone who only had one partner. A prevailing masculinity discourse is that men are faced with many opportunities to have sex with different women and are tempted to keep their "plate full" by having relationships with several women (Sawyer-Kurian, et al., 2010, p. 21). Multiple partners was the 'in thing', almost an integral part of how these Coloured men constructed masculinity. This concurs with the Morrell et al.'s (2013) suggestion that hegemonic masculinity may represent what is most 'fashionable' in masculinity.

Such cultural scripts of male sexuality seem to encourage some male irresponsibility, aggression and entitlement as natural and inevitable. Women, on the other hand, are taught to project innocence and protect their virginity, which serves to define and preserve women's "morality" (Froyum, 2010; McClain, 2006). Træen and Martinussen (2008) have highlighted that some researchers explain this double standard from an evolutionary perspective as a result of biological differences between men and women. From a social constructionist perspective, it can be argued that the field of evolutionary psychology has gendered sexual behaviours and portrayed these as instinctual drives. The male needs to sow his seed widely and the female must find the most suitable father for her offspring (Træen & Martinussen, 2008). This type of discourse, rooted in evolutionary psychology, has lent credibility to what is commonly referred to as the 'sexual double standard', in which promiscuity

and engaging in ‘casual’ sexual relationships is sanctioned for young men but can have dire consequences for young women (Træen & Lewin, 2008; Træen & Martinussen, 2008).

Mcclain (2006) argues that the persistence of this sexual double standard hinders the development of a broader conception of sexuality that would foster the development of a sense of responsible sexual behaviour for men in poorer communities (Froyum, 2010; Mcclain, 2006). Mcclain (2006) encourages a new perspective that fosters the capacities of males and females to recognise, discuss and reflect upon how various cultural and social norms, as well as stereotypes, shape ideas about gender roles that currently underlie male and female sexual behaviour and fidelity.

#### **6.2.5 Men mostly initiate sex**

Although two women in the present study indicated that they actively initiated sex, it was mostly men, who initiated sex.

Avril (36, C), for example, said: *“Andre touches me in a certain way then I know it is going to happen... and we exchanges glimpses and we flirt with each other.”* Andre (42, C) confirms that he does the initiating but also added: *“I also want to feel what it feels like to get an erection when she touches me. I tell her that is not right. You women just want us men to touch you, but you do not do it for us.”*

Iris (51, M) said that Ivan (49, M) touched her when she is busy cooking in the kitchen and kissed her from the back. *“That physical touch shows me he loves me.”* She said she wanted to be touched so that she could be sexually aroused. Ivan (49, M) confirmed that he would kiss her in the neck and hold her in the kitchen as his way to initiate closeness between them.

Noel (39, C), meanwhile, revealed: *“I enjoy the foreplay. I enjoy giving her hugs and kisses first; then we have sex.”* Noelen (36, C) confirmed that Noel (39, C) takes the lead when it comes to sex as she states: *“He loves to talk about sex and he loves putting sexual stuff on his phone then he will ask me when we are going to do this [sex position]?”*

Implicit in many women’s talk is the assumption of male traditional roles, in which men’s sexual needs are the influential force in having sex and women’s roles are to respond to these needs. Most women in the present study did not portray themselves as responsible for initiating sex, except for Hanlie (28, M) and Bella (25, C). These findings support the more popular views in South Africa that most men still initiate sexual activities and take on a more active role than women (Wildschut, 2005). Wildschut (2005) argues that Coloured men adhering to sex role scripts might be under pressure to initiate sex and to be sexually active or to convey this impression, because the expectation in Coloured communities is that men’s interest in sex is generally high and that men have sex frequently. In addition, Brown Travis and White (2000) indicated that most men and women globally adhere to gender sex roles and that men, in general, are encouraged to have sex.

Other South African research also shows that sex is regarded as a male-dominant domain in which men lead or coerce woman into the act (Akintola et al., 2011; Kaufman et al., 2008). Sawyer-Kurian et al., (2010) reported that the Coloured men in their study indicated that they are the ones who mainly initiate sex; these men gave detailed accounts of how they plan to have women have sex with them, regardless of whether the women they were with are intoxicated or high on drugs at the time (Sawyer-Kurian et al., 2010). Akintola et al. (2011) also found that some older Black men coerce their Black, female, university student girlfriends, into having sex with them. This is in agreement with findings from other South African studies conducted on White, Black and Coloured males (Ratele et al., 2014). Ratele et al. (2014) suggest that emphasising sex is an important way for many boys and men to prove their heterosexuality. In doing this, males tend to emphasise what has been called the “male sexual drive discourse” (p. 563). According to Ratele et al. (2014), the boys in their study indicated that they are obsessed with having sex because being sexually inactive is “pathologised” (p. 563).

Coloured males in Sawyer-Kurian et al's study (2010) indicated that their need for heterosexual sex was an exasperating, compelling obligation. This pressure for sexual activity is seen as the central point of boy-girl /male-female relations. For all of the above reasons, it seems that men feel obligated to initiate sex. The abovementioned studies of Ratele et al (2014) with White, Black and Coloured males also report the social beliefs and norms regarding sex; in essence, if you are man, you are supposed to initiate and engage in sex with a woman. This notion was supported by the results of the current study.

However, as mentioned earlier, Hanlie (28, M) and Bella (25, C) indicated that they initiate sex. As discussed in 6.2.5, this seems to indicate that there is a movement away from traditional norms where women are subjugated, and that some women do take a more agentic role in sex. Hanlie (28, M), for example, said: *"I do not wait for him. If I want sex I will take sex."* Bella (25, C) also called Bennie into the house when they were alone at home to have sex with her.

These younger women did not seem to adhere to the dominant discourse on femininity. Previous South African research has described women's sexuality as either being agentic or not (Shefer & Foster, 2001). The findings of the current study, however, indicate that femininity, sexuality and agency constructions in one community deviated somewhat from the norm. For example, some of the older women in this study did not initiate sex, whereas some of the younger women felt quite at ease to initiate sex. This suggests alternative femininities co-exist with and challenge dominant femininities. This corresponds with Steenkamp's (2005) argument that the notion of femininity is not a single set of traits that characterises women in general, but can take on myriad of forms depending on the class, race or age of the woman, as indicated in this Coloured community.

#### **6.2.6 Women are responsible for keeping men sexually satisfied and committed**

Bella (Bennie's partner) (25, C) said: *"Our pastor one day told us in church that sometimes when the man comes home, women tend to turn their backs when men ask for sex, then women tend to*

say, “No, I am tired.” He said that is when the man goes and visits another woman for sex. So if you don’t want your man to visit another woman, then I must keep him happy!” Freda (Freddie’s partner) (46, M), agreed with this notion of sex as a duty that women have to fulfil: “Sometimes he wants sex when I do not want to, but then I have to give him what he is entitled to, that is a woman’s way of saying thank you, and it is important to say thank you.” Iris (Ivan’s partner) (51, M), meanwhile, said: “I do not always feel like having sex, but then I give to him, as this is what is required of me as a wife.”

Johanna (Johan’s partner) (60, M) said: “I feel so sorry for him. I am older than him and I am not always able to fulfil him sexually like I am supposed to. I try, but I can’t be the way I would like to be at my age, but I try my best with him. He doesn’t let me feel bad. His love for me is huge. Just someone that loves me that much can endure what he has to endure!” Johan (60, M) said that he would like to have more sex, but that his wife was not able to satisfy his need all the time: “I would like to have sex more often, but she can’t so what must I do?”

Leonie (Leon’s partner) (28, C) also gave an indication of how community members reinforced the idea that women should please men sexually: “When men were asked, ‘Why do you cheat on your girlfriend?’ then they would say, ‘You see that girl has no interest in sex. If I get to her she is full of excuses; she is always tired, and says no wait, not now!’ He told us that men go sleep around because girls do not want to give them sex. It boils down to the fact that the people believe that to show your partner you love him you must give him sex.”

The above responses suggest that the women in the present study seemed to believe that women are responsible for satisfying their men’s needs and to prevent them from straying. The dominant discourse is that men would wander away if their female partners refuse to do what is expected of them, namely to give men sex. Similarly, Akintola et al. (2011) found that young women in Kwazulu Natal see sexuality as a duty. Sawyer-Kurian and colleagues reported that a strong belief amongst some Coloured men is that their wives, partners or girlfriends cannot say no to sex, because they “belong to the man” (Sawyer-Kurian et al., 2010, p. 20). This belief of both Coloured men and women places the responsibility for men’s sexual behaviour and fulfilment on women.

In addition, Coloured men in Cape Town stated that a characteristic that they use in determining whether a woman will be a girlfriend was whether she was obedient; in other words, whether she does what she is told (Sawyer-Kurian et al., 2010). This means that if a man asked for sex, the woman must be obedient and give in to his sexual needs. The main point here is that women use their female bodies to satisfy men and, when successful at this, they are deemed a good woman. Even though it may appear positive for a woman to be thought of as sexually pleasing to men, a serious disadvantage associated with this is that female bodies are seen as objects for male pleasure, which highlighted men's control and power, hegemonic masculinity. Furthermore, if women do not adhere to these cultural perceptions of what real women should be like or are seen to be acting in culturally unacceptable ways, they are regarded as less of a woman (Ratele et al., 2014).

#### **6.2.7 Men and women enjoy sex**

Both Bennie (24, C) and Bella (25) indicated that they enjoyed sex. Bennie was less descriptive than Bella but indicated that he enjoyed having sex with Bella and that he felt loved and close to her in those moments. Bella, despite feeling that she was "living in sin" with Bennie, was the most expressive and elaborated in her description of her sexual experience and enjoyment:

*"Now before we have sex we kiss with the tongues and he touches me. Then I get these shivers of excitement. My whole body and blood becomes hot and my heart beats faster. And when we have sex, it is like a dance; we become one. So I feel he tries to do everything to satisfy me. So I try and satisfy him. We try the positions that won't hurt either of us, but those that we both enjoy."*

Freda (46, M) said: *"I enjoy sex with him, especially the warm feelings I get when we have sex."* Freddie (66, M) confirmed: *"We enjoy sex a lot. For me sex is exciting and satisfying."* Gerrie (42, C) confessed with a raised voice of excitement that sex with Gertruida was *"a mind blowing*

*experience” and that he had never felt about another woman the way he felt about her. His partner Gertruida confirmed their enjoyment of sex: “It is actually fantastic to experience it. Just the fact that he is with me and we lay in bed and we having sex then I can really feel he is with me.”*

The men in this study highlighted that they had pleasurable experiences with their monogamous partners. In contrast, most of the dominant discourses in the literature emphasises men’s biological drive for sex (Durr, 2008; Vohs & Baumeister, 2004). Shefer, Strebel, Wilson, Shabala, Simbayi, Ratele, Potgieter & Andipatin (2002) argue that men quest for sexual interactions in line with the popular construction of masculinity as driven by inherent, essentialised sexual urges or what has been termed the “male sexual drive” (p. 1360). Sawyer Kurian et al. (2010), for example found that Western Cape Coloured men fervently and frequently seek out sex with their partners, casual partners or one-night stands. These men did not mention the pursuit of pleasure. Even if the pursuit of pleasure was taken for granted by both the researchers and the participants, it still highlights that men’s motivations for the pursuit of sex are taken for granted.

The existing literature seems to place emphasis on men wanting frequent sex and less on their experiences of pleasure. The dominant discourse in literature suggests that it is about performing sex in order to adhere to dominant notions of successful masculinity. According to Wildschut (2005) who conducted a study with young Coloured males, the urge attached to having sex can be attributed to what he called a ‘manly’ component of sexual intercourse (p.93). Wildschut argues that having sexual intercourse and having multiple partners serves as proof of young Coloured men’s heterosexual masculinity. This also relates to Sawyer-Kurian’s et al. (2010) and Wildschut’s (2005) studies that postulate that frequent sex with a female is at the centre of young men’s concept of masculinity. Thus ‘compulsory heterosexuality’ thus forms an integral part of how a masculine sexuality is constructed (Wildschut, 2005, p.111). It is also possible, that the men in this current study and in other studies may have overemphasised this aspect of their sexual relationships to portray themselves as good heterosexual lovers (Patrick et al., 2007; Wildschut, 2005).

In addition, most of the Coloured men in Wildschut's (2005) and Sawyer-Kurian et al's (2010) study indicated an emotional detachment from sexual intercourse, with more focus on conquest and the urge associated with the sexual act.

However, my male participants indicated that sex was also was also a source of pleasure, enjoyment and experience of intimacy for them. Similarly, Wildschut (2005) found that a few young Coloured men in his study also deviated from the norm and indicated that "sexual intercourse is more than just having sex for sex or just performing in what is expected of a man in terms of reproduction." (p. 94). Thus, these men could be seen as resisting popular norms and discourses of male heterosexuality in which sexual performance and conquests are considered the ultimate goal of male sexuality Connell (2000; 2005a).

Although some of the older female participants in my study felt obliged to attend to the sexual needs of their male partners, many women also described enjoying sex with their partners, as some of the quotes above indicate. Similarly, Macleod and Tracey (2010) and Shefer et al., (2002) also found a more positive discourse regarding South African disadvantaged women's sexuality and desires. This contrast with prior South African research that has tended to highlight women's sexual disempowerment and lack of pleasure discourses (e.g. Shefer & Foster, 2001). This may suggest an emerging or strengthening of a discourse amongst women, or at least younger women, that their sexual interactions with men are not primarily focused on men's sexual needs but on fulfilling their own needs and desires. This suggests that some young women in this community are challenging popular discourses on feminine sexuality, which favours men. Women are no longer available to only please men, but instead some of these women in this study valued the experience of enjoyment and pleasure.

#### **6.2.8 Sex as a private activity**

Several participants mentioned the impact of their lack of privacy on their sexual activities. Andre (42, C) shyly stated that he and Avril (36, C) had to wait until the children were asleep before they



could have sex: *“We have to wait till the early hours of the morning or sometimes we have to send the little one to my sister’s and then it is just the little one there by us; then we are alone now, coz he sleeps. I then make a little fire and then we sit around it. Then I would whisper in her ear, and then we will sometimes go around the corner outside as the little one is sleeping inside. We don’t want to disturb the little one, so we have to do a quickie!”* Avril confirmed that sometimes they sent their older boy over to Andre’s sister so that they could be alone to have sex.

Henry (36, M) and Hanlie (28, C) had the same problem. Henry revealed: *“We have a special time because we can’t do it when the children are awake. We wait until the children are asleep, but it is not every night, we have to wait. It must also be a special time when we have sex with one another. That is why I need a house.”* Hanlie confirmed: *“We enjoy each other very much, but we can only enjoy sex when the children are not there especially when the older boy is not there. It is now school holidays then he will go spend some time with my aunt. When he [husband’s child] is here we can’t have sex the way we want to; we can’t have sex during the week that he is staying with us. We cannot express ourselves. When the older boy [the couple’s own child] sleeps with us, then we do not worry about sex. We can only do it maybe once a week, but then it has to be when the children are asleep, that is very late at night or in the middle of the night.”*

Other partners also noted how a lack private space contributed to their construction of sexual intimacy. Bennie (24, C) said: *“We have sex when we are alone, when no one is in the house other than us... when parents are not there. If I am outside, she will call me in and will tell me she wants sex. We have sex in the room.”* Eddie (30, C), meanwhile, had the following to say: *“Yes I need a place of my own, because we are in the room which is separated by a curtain. If someone talks in the house or smokes a cigarette then everybody knows. They can hear everything, so that is why I must get a house for us, for me, her and the child. I can’t do my thing [have sex] when I want to; now that is shit.”*

Noelien (36, C) and her partner had to wait for time alone before they could experience sexual intimacy: *“When we are alone at home or in the room, when there are not a lot of people around*

*then we can do it in the room and we can lock the door, otherwise we are just in the room by ourselves. He will be playing on his phone while I will lie on the bed and read."*

The dominant discourse was that sex should be private; that children should not be exposed to parents having sex, and that in a private space, there was more freedom to be sexually expressive. The issue of privacy was very important, and the abovementioned responses were similar to those in Shefer et al.'s. (2002) study. The latter indicated that sex is something secret and private in rural communities. Thus, the social construction of sex as secret and private, together with participants' physical living conditions, determined when and where couples could be sexually intimate.

As indicated in 5.4, only three out of the fifteen couples had a house of their own. Five couples lived in wendy houses or wooden structures, and nine couples shared their bedroom with one or more children. Most households consisted of the couple and their children, as well as extended family, such as the father, mother, brother, sister, grandchildren and/or children of persons boarding in the house. Many couples thus lacked privacy. They could not have sex spontaneously, but had to plan it, which led to limited sexual intimacy. This specifically applied to the couples who shared their bedroom with one or more children at night. Some couples had to wait until the early hours of the morning to have sex, or had to have sex outside their house. Sexual intimacy was thus constructed in non-intimate spaces for these participants.

Bryant and Stanik (2012) and Nezhad and Goodarzi (2011) assert that a frequent and gratifying sexual relationship is an important aspect of an intimate relationship and *vice versa*. Some of the respondents in the present study indicated that the lack of private space negatively influenced the frequency and quality of their sexual interactions, and that they believed that having their own home and privacy would improve the sexual intimacy in their relationship. This is indicative of the role of social and economic factors in constructing and determining the frequency and quality of sexual interactions in relationships in low-income groups. Research on the topic reveals that private space is indeed important for expressing and experiencing intimacy. For example, Hastings et al.'s (2004) and Cox's (2009) studies indicate that poor quality of housing in the USA negatively affects a

couple's sexual intimacy and the frequency of intimate interactions. There is limited South African research on the link between intimacy and the lack of private space, but the findings of the current study suggest that physical space and sexual expression are correlated, and that living in small spaces inhibits sexual expression and generates tension and frustration.

The lack of privacy also seemed to add an element of anticipation or excitement to couples' sexual experiences. Henry (36, M), for example, said: *"We have a special time because we cannot do it when the children are awake. We wait until the children are asleep, but it is not every night, we have to wait. It must also be a special time when we have sex with one another."* Hanlie (28, C), Henry's partner, said: *"During school holidays, I will encourage my husband to send our older son to my aunt. Then he will say, 'Oh so that is why you wanted to send the child, so we can have sex.' Then I will say, 'Yes of course that is the reason; you can read my mind!'"*

Andre gave a vivid description of the excitement that he felt when he had to hurry sex along before the children woke up: *"It is so intense...coz the thing must get finished now...the children can wake up anytime now. Our mind must be on the sex now, but also on the children, because what if they wake up, sister!"*

Eddie (30, C) indicated that the sexual encounters between him and Edwina were stolen moments. He said in a raised voice with excitement: *"Sometimes I am home early. Then it just happens! When the child is asleep we put him aside. That is when she and I have sex!"*

Usually research emphasises the negative consequences of poor housing quality and lack of space, for example, Bryant and Stanik (2007) and Cox (2009) found that it was associated with higher levels of discontent and poorer relationship quality. The above quotes, however, suggest that the lack of privacy or space can also have a positive impact on couples' sexual experiences. It seemed to add an element of excitement and anticipation which could heighten sexual enjoyment.

### 6.3 Theme Three: Closeness in talking

Both men and women indicated their need to verbally share and talk about daily events. They often referred to daily catching-up conversations in which they shared the events of the day as experiences of closeness. Other studies have also concluded that talking is undeniably related to the degree of closeness experienced by couples (Bagarozzi, 2001; Laurencau & Kleinman, 2005).

Although both men and women emphasised togetherness, there was a difference in the way men and women articulated their experiences. The dyadic analysis highlighted that more women than men felt that talking to their partners was a special time for them.

According to Avril (36, C), she and Andre (42, C) could talk about anything, and she found talking with him exciting and enjoyable. *“It feels good to be with him, because then I am just free to talk to him about anything and everything.”* Andre indicated that even though they did talk about various things, he said he mostly listened, as he did not have the need to talk all the time. It seemed that Avril valued talking more than her husband.

Leonie (28, C) said: *“When we have a problem, we talk about it immediately and if a decision needs to be made, we make it together. It is during these times that I feel most close to him, especially when we lay in bed talking.”* Leon (24, C) said that Leonie did most of the talking, and he mostly listened to her, as he was not a man of many words.

Noelien (36, C) also enjoyed their talking, and felt she was able to talk to Noel (39, C) about a range of things in a safe and intimate way: *“The highlight of our relationship is when we talk to each other. I enjoy it when we are home alone and just chatting. He is the only person I can talk to; he understands and listens to me.”* Noel (39, C) agreed that they were able to talk about the children, her family, and things she wanted to buy.

Men and women participants indicated their need to verbally share and talk about daily events. They often referred to daily catching-up conversations in which they shared the events of the day, as experiences of closeness.

*Carl (60, M) and Cathy (60, M) talked to each other while they sat down to eat at night and then Carl would tell her where he was and what he encountered during his day. Cathy said: "It is so nice that I can share with him what happened during the day. That is what is important to me, that he is there so I can share all these things with him.*

Daniel (43, C) said he was able to talk to Doris about the things he heard or saw during the day. Doris (42, C) indicated that they talked especially at night: *Before we sleep then we lay close and talk about the things that happened to us during the day."*

Freda (46, M) said: *"We talk about everything. At night I can't wait for him to get home so I can tell him everything and that is so nice for me, to be able to talk to him and to joke with him. He will talk to me about what happened at work and I will tell him what happened here at home while he was at work. When he comes home then his coffee is ready. He'll eat a sandwich and then we sit and talk about what happened during the day."* Fred says that after she had hugged and kissed him when he returned home at night, she would make him coffee, and then she would excitedly relate the latest news and gossip of the day to him.

Hanlie (28, C) and Henry (36, M) confirmed that talking was important to them. Henry said: *"I will greet her good evening, ask her how her day was, etcetera. Then she would ask me how it was at my work. Then I will tell her."* Hanlie said that talking was very important to her, because every night when he came from work she would ask him about his day at work. She said he would also ask her about her day at home with the children. She would then relay to him everything she did as indicated in the quotes: *"I enjoy it when he comes home, because then we can talk about all sorts of things. I enjoy talking to him. It is special to me, because every day when he comes from work then I*

*will ask him: "So how was work today, and what did you and your colleagues do at work today?" Then he will ask me, "So what happened here at home; what did you do?" Then I would say: "Oh I made food, waited for the children to come from crèche, and then waited for you to come home."*

Other females also indicated that talking to their partner was a very enjoyable and special time.

Mary (Mark's partner) (Age 28, C) said: *"It feels good to be with him when I am able to talk to him"*.

Cathy (Carl's partner) (60, M) said: *"I enjoy being close to him. [She smiles when she talks about him]. I told him that I would live with him anywhere, as long as we are together. We buy groceries together, and Sundays we go to church together. It is a good experience to be in each other's company."*

As indicated in the quotes above, talking was the way especially women in this sample seem to experience intimacy with their partner. This corresponds with the mainstream view that verbal sharing is a major pathway to intimacy for women (Fehr, 2004; Hook et al., 2003). This is not to say that men do not value talking, indeed, they do, but fewer men mentioned the importance of talking, just as indicated in Hook et al.'s (2003) study. Patrick and Beckenbach (2009) on the other hand, found that men do value disclosing information to their partner. However, it needs to be mentioned that Patrick and Beckenbach's (2009) sample consisted of only five men.

Patrick and Beckenbach (2009) propose that women are socialised to focus more on talking in close relationships, whereas men are socialised to complete chores and tasks for their partners as an expression of intimacy. Relatedly, it is argued that females are socialised with a focus on creating and maintaining close and amicable relationships (Harach & Kuczynski, 2005). Other research has also shown that self-disclosure is the primary pathway to intimacy for females, while shared activities lead to intimacy in males (Fehr, 2004; Hook et al., 2003).

### 6.3.1 Verbal expressiveness and love talk

Women also tended to mention verbal expressions of love more frequently in their accounts of closeness in their relationships.

Cathy (60, M), Carl's partner said: *"We talk about love and how we must love each other, and how we should not reject each other."* Carl (60, M) on the other hand said: *"I talk to her all day long. That is the way I show her I love her."*

Doris (42, C) said: *"When he holds me and tells me he appreciates me, he makes me feel secure. I feel secure when he reassures me of his love."* To Daniel (43, C) understanding was more important: *"When I speak to her, I feels that she understands me."*

Gertruida said: *"Then he would reassure me of his love and he will say I love you and I will always love you."* Gerrie (42, C), on the other hand indicated that they liked to talk intimately about their life together and their future plans. *"We talk about life together, and how we will grow old together."*

Leonie (28, C) said that when they were alone their talking became intimate. *"He tells me how much he loves me and kisses me."* Leon (24, C) on the other hand only said that he found their talking satisfying.

Olivia (24, C) also said: *"I like talking to him, because he always uses love words that make me happy."* Okkie (25, C) acknowledged that they have intimate talk and said: *"It feels good to be with her especially at night, before we go sleep, then we can talk privately, and we can share our feelings."*

In the above quotes women appreciated it when men were able to express their feelings of love to them. Lecours, Sanlian & Bouchard (2007), who summarised a wide body of research, concluded that due to socialisation in Western cultures, females (young girls, adolescents and adults) are more frequently verbally expressive than males about their feelings. This holds true for both positive and negative emotions and experiences (Lecours et al., 2007). Similarly, Bazan (2007) also found that Mexican women defined themselves as more verbally expressive of their feelings than men; and that it was socially expected of them as females. A common request in this research and in Mexican women's narratives was that their partners or husbands should communicate their feelings more (Bazan, 2007).

Men on the other hand, did not highlight verbal expressions of love in the same way as the women. Only Okkie (25, C) indicated that he enjoyed articulating his love for Olivia to her. Most men did not talk about feelings or express that they revealed their feelings during intimate talking times. This may be due to men typically finding it difficult to express their own feelings (Burns (2000). This difficulty is referred to as normative male alexithymia. Karakis and Levant (2012) define normative male alexithymia as: "the inability of some men to put emotions into words that is posited to result from traditional masculine gender role socialization, a key element of which is the restriction of emotional expression" (p. 180). Levant (2011) concludes that normative male alexithymia is prevalent in men who have been socialised to restrict their emotions. According to Levant (2011), these men do "not develop a vocabulary for, or an awareness of, many of their emotions. In particular, these men showed the greatest deficits in identifying and expressing emotions reflecting a sense of vulnerability (such as sadness or fear) or expressing attachment (such as fondness or caring)" (p. 772). It could therefore be difficult for men to exhibit such so-called feminine behaviour. As my male participants have also grown up in a community that endorses traditional gender roles, it is likely that they have not been socialised to acknowledge and express vulnerability. The influences of socialisation are relevant in revealing how contextual factors may form the bases for the behavioural patterns of individuals (Harding, 2007).



#### 6.4 Theme Four: Intimacy/Closeness in Concrete Acts of Care

##### 6.4.1 Men expressed care and concern through the things they do for their female partners

As shown in the excerpts below:

Ivan (49, M) said that he showed Iris acts of care and appreciation by doing chores and fixing things around the house: *“I pick up the things that are lying around, tidy the house, and to fix the things like the stove or cupboards that are broken. If I do not fix the stove then she gets really upset, so I rather do it before she gets upset, otherwise she will not cook.”* Irene confirmed that Ivan helped to clean the house, or fixed things around the house and helped with the cooking. She said he would cook, but would not do washing. He would also clean the yard and house. She proudly said: *“He won’t leave the house dirty, or won’t let me come home to a dirty house.”* She was proud of the fact that he did the things she was supposed to do and appreciated it.

Johan (Johanna’s partner) (53, M): *“I go out of my way to help my wife. When my wife comes home from work and she had phoned me to tell me she is carrying heavy then I will go help carry her bags. Or I will fetch her half-way. It does not matter if it rains or hail, I must go fetch and help her. I must make sure she gets home safe. I carry her grocery bags, or throw out her bath water. That is how I give love. That’s true love!”* Johanna (60, M) said she could ask him anything and he would do it for her. *“He helps me with everything I ask; in the morning when my legs are stiff he helps me to get up.”* She proudly said that some mornings when she woke up, the kitchen was already clean. *“Some mornings when I wake up the kitchen is shiny clean and he cleans the pots and washes the mats.”*

Leon (24, C) said he did a lot of acts of care for her. *“I help her by helping her around the house, to clean the yard and fix things. I do everything that makes her happy.”* Leonie (24, C) said she experienced acts of care when he did everything she asked of him: *“I can ask him anything such as asking him to help me in the kitchen; he will also fix the cupboard, clean the yard or go fetch something for me.”* She said that he did the things men are expected to do around the house such as to paint and clean the yard and that he also planted a vegetable garden.

Other men also indicated they tried to please their partners by doing what their partners requested of them.

Andre (Avril’s partner) (42, C) said: *“There are small things that I do for her. If she asks me to go to the shop for her, then I go! Yes that is love....If she tells me in the evening to go fetch water, then I go! I must get up to go fetch the water, because it is out of love that I get up! So everything I do is out of love! I show her love by doing things for her.”*

Bennie (24, C) said: *“If she tells me I must fix something... a small cupboard or so, then I do it for her or to fix the things that needed to be fixed... right, then I will fix it quickly. To show her that I love her is to pick up the things that are laying around...those things that she saw laying around.... And if she tells me I must clean the backyard, then I do it instead of me arguing with her... or telling her I don’t feel like it. I will do it! I show her love by doing things.... I will do anything for her.”*

The excerpts indicate that these Coloured men loved and cared for their partners by complying with women’s requests, implying that they needed direction from female partners in demonstrating particular kinds of intimacy. They also indicated that they performed tasks that they generally perceived as typical male tasks, such as fixing things or cleaning the outside space [yard] of the home. As Johan (53, M) noted, providing assistance to his partner through things seen as traditionally masculine in nature, such as “carrying her heavy bags, throwing out her bath water”, were special expressions of his care and concern. Ratele et al. (2014) postulate that in a culture

favouring hegemonic masculinity, within which males are socialised, they live with the construction that men and women are unequal. These authors posit that in this logic men's duty is to take care of the perceived "hard stuff" of the home, like fixing roofs, and women's tasks are "softer" tasks of cooking and taking care of children. Ratele et al. (2014) also found that males learned to steer away from certain activities and to engage in particular activities that would affirm them as men and not women. These types of gendered ideas were also found to be prevalent in this Coloured community. This was evident in how male respondents expressed a sense of pride that they performed specific gendered kinds of tasks for their partners. It appeared that they believed that by performing these tasks, they lived up to their own and society's definition of ideal love and being a good (male) partner.

Women, on the other hand, stressed that they did not need direction or requests; they took pride in pre-empting their men's needs.

Avril (Andre's partner) (36, C):

*"I do so much for him without him even asking me to do it. If I know that he is planning to go somewhere, I make sure that his clothes are in order on the day [he needs it]. If he comes to tell me that he is going somewhere on a specific day and that he wants me to have things ready, then I already have it ready for him. I have already heard him."*

Freda (Freddie's partner) (46, M):

*"Before he can even ask me then I hang his clothing neatly over the chair, because I know he likes it like that."*

Women reported expressing love through keeping the home and men's clothes neat and clean, and preparing food for their partners:

Bella (Benny's partner) (25, C):

*"I love and care for him by doing stuff for him that his mother can't do for him anymore, for example, I will do his washing, iron his clothes and sometimes I will wash his tackies [sports shoes] for him when he goes to work on a Friday and when I am at home. "*

Cathy (Carl's partner) (60, M):

*"I show love by taking care of him, I make his clothing neat for him, I wash and iron it and I mend those clothes that need mending. I fix it with the needle [laughter]."*

Freda (Freddie's partner) (46, M):

*"I love him by making sure his washing is clean and the place is clean. That is what a man longs for from a woman."*

Hanlie (Henry's partner) (28, M):

*"The way I love him is by making sure that when he comes from work that the house is clean, the food is cooked and his washing is clean and ironed. I wash the children and I make sure I look nice when he comes home. I don't want him to wonder why he chose me as a partner. I do everything for him that he ask me to do."*

The women also assumed that their male partners expected women to fulfil these tasks and that they used successful fulfilment of them as a means to evaluate women as good or worthy partners, as shown in the quotes below.

Freda (Freddie's partner) (46, M):

*"He expects me to do what a woman must do. I must cook and clean, and not be lazy."*

Hanlie (Henry's partner) (28, M):

*"I do everything he asks me because, he must not have a doubt in his mind about taking someone else rather than me."*

Avril (Andre's partner) (36, C):

*"I do it so he doesn't have to scold at me when he comes home. He mustn't think I am lazy."*

For these Coloured women, taking care of their partners' physical and personal needs through washing, cleaning, cooking and ironing was a primary concern and their way of expressing their love. On one level, their performance of these tasks may be seen as women unconsciously enacting their designated role as nurturer and carer subservient to the man's needs. However, when one listens to the interviews, it seems more than a mechanical performance; it is also a conscious and emotional effort to please their male partner. This, however, does not mean that these women are not subjugated. The gendered nature of the 'work' for love suggests that they are limited in the manner in which they can express their feelings, and this limitation is very likely due to the disempowering effects of this patriarchal community, in which it is women's duty to take care of their male partners' needs, and that their male partners should be their first concern. Historical gender norms in South Africa suggest that women are responsible for maintaining relationships, and that women are expected to be available to attend to their partners and to care for the home (Martin, 2013; Strebel et al., 2006;).

In such unequal, gendered relationships, men, who occupy positions of power tend to be less aware, less attuned to the needs and interests of their subordinate female partner. Martin's (2013) also postulates that power is relational, and is reflected in how the needs, interests, and goals of partners influence the other. Martin argues that power positions are reflected in who "feels entitled to express their needs or have them fulfilled? Who accommodates or organizes around the other? Who responds to provide care?" According to Martin (2013), "The less powerful, tend to automatically respond and accommodate the other" (p. 6). Martin (2013) suggests that the notion that couple relationships should be equal and enhance the well-being of both partners is a taken-for-granted assumption underlying most couple relationships, but as South African research, shows many

couples struggle to actually attain this goal of equality (Boonzaier, 2003; Setlalentoa et al., 2010; Shefer et al., 2004). Often, male power does not come from outright acts of domination, but instead from an unacknowledged supremacy of men's priorities, needs, and desires in ways that seem unquestionable or common (Martin, 2013).

In addition, Jamieson (1999) notes that research continually find that couples collaboratively generate feelings of care, intimacy and equality despite inequalities in their relationships. She argues that this kind of unconscious collusion to produce the illusion of equality contributes to the maintenance of gender inequalities in intimate relationships. Jamieson (1999) further notes that women often do the emotional work in intimate heterosexual relationships, and police their own emotions to ensure that they do not place too many demands on men. Men are also socialised to believe that women should manage the internal or emotional aspects of the relationship, while they protect the outside boundaries of the relationship (Patrick & Beckenbach, 2009). A critical discussion on gendered ways of constructing intimacy will be provided in the next chapter.

#### **6.4.2 Women express care through food, and men experience care through food**

Providing and preparing food seemed to be a particularly important component of expressing care for women. It was also a way men experienced care, as shown in the excerpts below:

Cathy (60, M) experienced a great sense of satisfaction from making food that her husband enjoyed. This was very clear from the tone of her voice, which was filled with love and care for her husband: *"I show him love when I.... It is nice for me when he comes from somewhere.... just to make him some tea and to put something in front of him to eat. He loves tea and he can drink tea the whole day."* Carl (60, M) confirmed that she cared for him through the delicious food that she cooked for him. *"When I arrive home she always has something nice for me to eat. Oh, my goodness, miss! She shows her love, coz she always makes sure there is something nice to eat. Like the older generation used to say, "The heat of the food will rise through the dishcloth!"* [Says it with a sense of

happiness and admiration for his wife] *Then I know there is something nice underneath it. Later when I see the heat has stopped rising... I lift it and there would be a sweet potato waiting for me that she baked in the oven. Then I will ask her, "Now what is this?" Then she will say, "It is for you; take it!" [He laughs].*

Hanlie (28, C) said: *"If he asks me for coffee then I make him coffee. I will not let him get up. I am then at home the whole day, why must he get up. Everything he asks I do for him".* Henry (36, M) confirmed that he experienced love through the things his wife does for him and said: *"She shows her love through caring for me, when I come home my coffee and food is waiting."*

Iris (51, M) saw it as a given that providing food was the way men understood women to express love: *"Of course he knows I love him! He must know, because when I get home, I still cook for him. So he can see that I love him."* For her husband Ivan, food seemed to epitomise caring and love as he said: *"The thing that makes me the happiest is when my wife brings me breakfast in bed, yes when she brings me breakfast in bed or if I am sick, when I have a cold she will make sure there are tablets and will lovingly attend to me. That makes all the fever and the illness disappear! One thing about her, she can make delicious food."*

Other women also indicated that they showed love through food.

Freda (Freddie's partner) (46, M) also felt that it was expected of women:

*"Like I said when he gets home...the food must be ready or if there is no food, bake him some bread. He loves his baked bread and soup. This is what any man desires from a woman, that she should not be lazy."*

As above, these male partners revealed that food played a role in how they experienced care.

Johan (Johanna's partner) (53, M) expressed a deep sense of appreciation for his wife's food and he too experienced this as her loving and caring for him, and a way in which she made him feel really special:

*"What I really enjoy is when she makes me a chicken pie and all the things that I like, especially donuts. Oh she makes the best donuts and with a little tea, then I eat myself 'til I burst at the seams. My wife also likes to bake cake, but I like donuts and milk tart. That is what I love. When she bakes milk tart for me, then I always tell her she is my best wife. When she brings me something nice from the shops then I think, "Oh so you still love me."*

Karel (Karin's partner) (39, M) added:

*"She shows her love by bringing me food stuff. Like sometimes she will come home from work and then she will bring me biltong [dried meat pieces] or smoked fish. She knows how much I like biltong and smoked fish. Or she will bring me chips."*

The excerpts above reflect two things: Women's love and care was reflected in preparing food or having their partner's favourite drink or meal ready when they arrived home, and secondly, men experienced love and care through food.

From the interviews, it was clear that women felt proud that they provided their partners with food, and they assumed that the listener would see it as an obvious expression of their love and care for their partner. Such care of their men by women could be seen as a way of establishing/maintaining a feminine identity. By ensuring that men are provided for, these Coloured female participants embodied the role of the loving, nurturing partner, a role that seemed to be favoured by participants in this Coloured community. As Avril noted: *"This community expects you as a woman, to be ready at all times for your husband. You have to cook and clean all day long."* This corresponds with findings from Salo (2003) who postulate that young women in the Coloured community of



Manenberg are judged in terms of the local ideology of domestic work, where motherhood and women's domestic roles such as cooking and cleaning were regarded as the feminine ideals. Other South African research also suggests that domestic acts of caring through food is typically considered feminised behaviours in other Black and Coloured communities (Ratele et al., 2014). This seems to be a cultural and gendered script which casts women in a specific role as carers or nurturers (Newcombe, McCarthy, Cronin, & McCarthy, 2012; Shefer et al., 2004).

It was also noted that making food was something peculiar and outside the norm for most of these Coloured men. Men perceived women to play a central role in cooking and in women's care of men. As with Ratele et al. (2014), my male participants celebrated the cooking skills of female partners through recounting tales of their successes with cooking the men's favourite meals. Thus, my male participants appeared to use the stratagem of praise for their partner's cooking as Ratele et al. (2014) put it, "to legitimate men's avoidance of a central role in such domestic labour" (Ratele et al., 2014, p. 560), and to place the responsibility of cooking on women. Females also assumed that women's preparation of food is a tacit expectation held by men and that it is women's duty to live up to these expectations. The question therefore arose: Did men share this view? In the excerpts above, men confirmed that they experienced food preparation as an expression of their partners' love and care for them.

The way men spoke about food and their partners described being nourished with food produced positive feelings towards their female partners. Both women and men therefore agreed that women's preparation and provision of food represented love, care and nourishment in a close loving relationship. According to Newcombe et al. (2012), based on their study in Ireland, there is a conscious decision by men to grant power to women over their eating practices, and men welcome and accept matriarchal governance in the kitchen. Newcombe et al. (2012) postulate that men abdicate control over food aspects and enjoy being cared for. This may be related to maintaining their position as heads of the home, who are served, fed and cared for. The same attitude was found in my research group where men were seen as dependent on the care of women in terms of meal preparation. Some of the men in the study also highlighted that their wives' superior skills and efficiency regarding food far outweighed their own. This also corresponds with findings from

Ratele et al. (2014) who found that some Coloured young men welcomed women to do the cooking, and took a back seat in food matters since they saw it as part of the women's role.

#### **6.4.3 Men express, and women experience love and care through gifts**

When asked how else they showed love to their partners, men viewed buying gifts as a way of showing love. Likewise, female partners felt loved when surprised with little gifts from their partners, as indicated below:

Andre (Avril's partner) (42, C) felt that he could not give Avril what he wanted to give her. He said that the extent to which he could show his love was limited by his financial situation: *"I always brought her chocolates, but these days not so much anymore, because I don't have money, but when I had I would always buy her chocolates. I want to give her so much to show her I love her, but I cannot."* Avril on the other hand, appreciated the small gestures, especially when he does them without her asking as she said: *"For example he will bring me the smallest thing, like a chocolate or a flower that he got and then he would say: 'Here my wife, I love you', or if he goes to the shop he will always bring something nice, even if I have not asked for it."*

Carl (60, M) indicated that he would spend his last money on his wife: *"I will always bring home something nice for her. I always reach out in order to show my love to her. Some evenings I will go to the shop.... There I will buy her a chocolate. I show her I love her by the chocolate or the packet of biscuits I bring her, and if I have a few cents then I will buy her something with my last money. I will also bring something nice home from wherever I come from. At night I will go to the shop to buy her some chocolate."* Cathy (60, M) affirmed Carl's consideration of her: *"He will always bring me something nice from wherever he comes. He will bring me a chocolate or so. He will never come home empty-handed."*

Eddie (30, C) expressed the surprise element of giving: *"Sometimes we go to the town to do window shopping, coz with the R600 I get we can't buy much, but then I spoil her by buying her a chocolate. She won't even know that I had bought her a chocolate, but when we get home then I will give it to her, coz this woman of mine, I love her very much. Yes, I love her very much."* Edwina (30, C) gave Eddie (30, C) acknowledgement for buying her gifts: *"He shows me, because one thing he will always bring me a chocolate or something or stuff like that."*

Johan (53, M) also bought things that he knew his partner liked; he was considerate of his partner's needs: *"If I know she loves something then I will make special effort to get her the things she loves. For example, she loves butternut. Now if I see it, I will buy butternut, just because she loves it. She also loves guavas. Now I will go to the little market and will buy a big bag of guavas which she likes. Now when I get to the room she is surprised to see that I have brought her favourite fruit. Everything she likes I do it for her."* Johanna (60, M) also appreciated her partner's gestures as indicated: *"I must give him his due, he always comes home with something from the shops, whether it is a bag of oranges or 'naartjies' [type of nectarine], then he would say: 'I brought you something nice.' Yes that is how he is; he will always bring something nice home."*

Other men also indicated that they expressed care through gifts.

Daniel (Doris's partner) (43, C) indicated that his care and concern for his wife extended to the boundaries of his financial means:

*"If I have money, I will do everything for her, like I bought her DSTV at OK Bazaars."*

Okkie (Olivia's partner) (24, C) added:

*"I show her I love her because sometimes I will surprise her. If there is money I will buy her a bunch of flowers. She also likes chocolates. I surprise her then she knows that I have been thinking about her."*

From the quotations above, it is evident that men behaved in socially scripted ways by giving their partners presents such as flowers and chocolates as a token of their love, and the women received these as an indication of men's appreciation and love for them. Sourcing gifts for their partners was largely mentioned by male participants as gestures they performed voluntarily, in their own time, and as independent of the shopping practices of their female partners. These men confirmed their masculine identity as good carers and providers through the buying of gifts. Research in Africa shows that heterosexual relationships involve gifts as well as other material benefits for women (Hunter, 2002; Masvawure, 2010). Men are expected to be the providers of gifts and to initiate these romantic gestures while women are typically the recipients thereof.

In her study in the same research community as mine, showing love and feelings of closeness was associated with giving gifts or taking a partner out among Coloured adolescent males (Furphy, 2011). According to Furphy (2011), this action invariably involves spending some money. Furphy (2011) further argued that Coloured women in this community, who are of limited means, may see it as the lengths their partner will go to for them. In her study, Furphy (2011, p. 98) found that girls "expected boys to be more demonstrative of their love and care as they felt that it is the male's role to take a more active part in relationships." It is further argued that such expectations "construct men as action-orientated and prescribed an action orientated approach to love and relationships" (Furphy, 2011, p. 98). In correspondence with Furphy's (2011) findings, it seems that Coloured adult men too adhere to this provider masculinity. Similar to other communities, these Coloured men are able to provide gifts as they have an economic advantage over their female partners as financial earners, and their gift buying could be seen as representing the economic power of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005; Lips, 2006).

#### **6.4.4 Men care through providing**

Besides doing domestic tasks requested by their female partners and buying occasional gifts, providing financially for their female partners emerged as another way through which many men in

this study expressed their love and care. When they were unable to meet this gendered expectation, it resulted in some male partners experiencing feelings of inadequacy and low self-worth.

This is evident in the response of Andre (42, C): *“The worst thing for me is... to be honest with you. I can’t give her what I want to give her. I want to give her such a lot, coz I love her. But I don’t have a good job and income. [He looks downcast while talking and projects a sense of inadequacy]. Because I love her, I want to give her all she desires and deserves.”* Avril said: *“I am just happy to see him when he comes from work. Just happy that he is still alive and with us and that he can still provide for us.”* Avril said that Andre was not always honest with her when it came to money and that she recognised that it was his money, but she just wanted to know what he had done with his income.

Gerrie (Gertruida’s partner) (42, C) added that providing for his partner was a male’s responsibility and it was the ultimate way he could show his love and care: *“The thing is... if you want to take a wife and you want to show her you love her you must be able to provide for her. She mustn’t still struggle. I must have a good stable job when I get married. It’s a responsibility! If you have a wife you are responsible for her. To be responsible means to provide for her... it means to put food on the table everyday... when I provide I want to give her the best, regarding clothing, food, and a home.”* Gertruida, Gerrie’s partner said: *“He is a good worker and a good provider for me.”*

Noel (Noelien’s partner) (39, M) said: *“When the finances dry up, then things are not so good, then she also says: No, we can’t go out, we don’t have money. Any person wants to go out with money ... that is not nice for me, and then I feel disappointed. Then it feels that she is angry with me.”* While Noelien said: *“He provides for me. He does not want me to work. He wants me to be home, so he is satisfied that I’m at home. When he gets paid then we work out our budget, then we buy things for us like clothing, and toiletries.”*

Henry (Hanlie’s partner) (36, M) also expressed his strong yearnings for his family to have a home of their own as his way of providing for his family, and showing his love and care to his partner.

Henry also highlighted the social norm that he believed all men should adhere to when he said *“it is very important for any man...”*:

*“Yes, it’s very important for any man to show his family that he loves and cares for them. My biggest role is to provide for my wife and children. To keep them happy that they won’t lack anything, that they don’t go hungry. That is my biggest role! I ask God every night, I ask God every night before I close my eyes that I would only be able to provide a roof over my wife and children’s head, just for a house...then he can then take me away. The house is the most important thing. It is very important to me to see that they are okay. Then I can die, at this moment that is the most important thing for me. Coz the home offers protection and warmth, doesn’t it? Yes that my wife can also stand in her own kitchen and the boy can sleep in his own room...., but I believe it will happen one day.”*

And Eddie (Edwina’s partner) (30, C) added:

*“I want to give them everything..... So the worst thing is I cannot give her what I want to. Of course for any woman, even for you [referring to the researcher], you would want that. How would you react if you know your partner does not work and you must put food on the table alone? Of course it is bad!”*

Andre (Avril’s partner) (42, C):

*“I don’t work all the time now... Like now I work three days and sometimes half days, yes work is very scarce here and the money is very little. Sometimes I will hear how her friends tell her of the things their husbands bought them. It makes me feel sad that I cannot also give her what I would love to give her.”*

Eddie (Edwina’s partner) (30, C):

*“It makes me feel shit of course that I don’t have work!”*

Ivan (Iris’s partner) (49, M):

*“Sometimes when I am depressed drinking makes me feel better. Like now I’m not working so yes it does get to you. I feel I cannot even contribute!”*

From the above quotations, it seems that it was important for men to provide for their partner as their way of expressing care. Women also accepted men to be the providers and felt loved and cared for by their men's financial provision. The quotations also indicated that men felt under pressure to perform in the area of work, and to provide for their family.

Women also indicated how impressed they were when their partner was able to provide, as evident in the quotes below:

Johanna (60, M) indicated how impressed she was with the things Johan bought for the two of them, and that she valued his contributions. As she said: *"He also buys R100 electricity every month and a pocket of potatoes. He buys big, white expensive potatoes! He says he doesn't buy cheap... [giggles] and he buys meat [sounds impressed]. He also buys one or two tongues and when he gets paid then he buys something nice for us to braai."*

Freda (46, M) said: *"He and I are so close. He provides for me. I do not know what I will do if anything should happen to him."*

Getruida (24, C) said: *"He will do everything to show me he loves me, that is how he shows his interest in me, if I don't have, he will go and make a loan to give to me."*

These Coloured women appeared to appreciate being provided for by their partners. They saw it as a way the men in their lives expressed their love and care towards them, and they felt special to their male partners. It also needs to be considered here that many of the women in the quotations above had no full-time or any kind of other employment, and their physical survival therefore depended on their male partners' provision. Some men in this community also preferred that their

female partners stay at home and not work. It seems like these men preferred to maintain the gender script of men are supposed to work and women are supposed to stay at home. In other relationships in which men were unemployed, this became a major point of contention between couples. Women were frustrated and unhappy with men who did not work.

Karel (Karin's partner) (39, M) was also unemployed while Karen (36, M) was the sole provider in the family. According to him his lack of work was one of the biggest problems in their relationship. He believed that having a job equalled a better intimate relationship: *"Now that I am not working, we argue a lot. If only I can work it will make the relationship better."* Karen (36, M) too was very unhappy with the fact that her husband could not find a job and found it stressful when he asked her for money and spent it on alcohol. She said she was especially angry with him because he was unemployed, but burdened her pay cheque with his shebeen debt.

Ivan (Iris's partner) (49, M) indicated that his wife's unhappiness was due to his jobless situation: *"She insists that I go find work. I keep telling her that the employers say I'm too old and they are looking for younger people, and there is nothing I can do. That is when she starts stressing [moaning at him] again"*. Iris confirmed her deep dissatisfaction with her husband not providing: *"A bad thing about him is he doesn't fucking work. In the morning when I wake up then I will tell him: "You make me so fucking mad. You must get up and go work, because I can't get up like this anymore."*

This sub-theme highlights two important issues (i) these Coloured men assumed that it is their responsibility to provide and (ii) when they were unable to provide, it affected their self-esteem negatively. Ratele et al. (2014) noted that such constructions are also found in Black, Coloured and White men in other parts of South Africa. Strebel et al. (2006) and Shefer et al. (2008) also found that many Black South Africans support the notion that men are breadwinners and that South African societal expectations emphasise that the men should be productive in the area of a career and work (Van der Watt, 2007).



Men's need to provide can be viewed as a socially constructed role that prescribes behaviours which leads to the construction of provider masculinity (Bhana & Pattman, 2011). According to Bhana and Pattman (2011), provider masculinity is also relevant in constructions of love as men who can provide material earnings, become attractive as partners for women. Such men offer a more lucrative financial state that is in direct opposition to the poverty many women face in their daily existence (Bhana & Pattman, 2011; Furphy, 2011). Men's role as provider is also informed by hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity refers to the specific type of socially exalted, normative masculinity that has been vastly propagated since the 1950's (Hart, 2013), in which men are portrayed as providers. In this case, the gendered ideology of a man going to work was rooted in widely accepted gender roles that defined men as breadwinners and women as mothers (Hart, 2013).

According to Hart (2013), the ideology of the time was that if men wanted to fit in and wanted to appear normal, men had to learn to personally embrace and conform to the hegemonic persona of the family breadwinner (Hart, 2013). Similar notions of hegemonic masculinity also seem to underlie Coloured heterosexual relationships in this low-income community, and are also present in other Black South African communities (Boonzaier & De La Rey, 2003; Strebel et al., 2006). However, Morrell et al. (2013), Salo (2003) and Ratele (2013) postulate that South Africa is a diverse society where a single national hegemony is not evident due to differences in race, class, and ethnicity. This suggests that different ethnic or cultural groups may have their own constructions of hegemonic masculinity, and that Coloured hegemonic masculinity may share similarities, but may also vastly differ from other racial groups in South Africa. For this reason, a unique hegemonic masculinity may be assumed in this semi-rural, Coloured community, one that likely differs from Coloured men with higher education and income.

Male participants in this study seemed to suffer feelings of depression and unworthiness because they felt that they failed in their roles as providers. This is similar to Van der Watt's (2007) findings, which indicate that when men believed that they were falling short in this regard, they felt that they were unworthy/not good enough/not "man" enough. Van der Watt (2007) also argues that work forms an important part of the masculinity construction and that nothing has proven to be

more detrimental to men's sense of masculinity than unemployment and the consequence of not being able to provide.

In the current study, participants' responses highlighted that both women and men viewed and practiced acts of love in terms of the performance of stereotypical, gender-based roles and tasks. This corresponds with Butler's (1990) notion of gender performativity, which explains the importance of acting like a man or woman in order to be considered as a man or woman. From this perspective, the participants in this study were either doing what they considered demonstrative of their man- or womanhood. The pervasiveness of this theme also indicated that it is very likely that these roles are part of a social script adhered to by men and women in this Coloured community. Gender expectations are shaped and derived from societal forces, which determine what is considered appropriate or normal behaviour. In their study, Patrick and Beckenbach (2009) found that, for men, the concept of manhood embodied certain gender roles, such as that of rescuer, protector and provider. Patrick and Beckenbach (2009) propose that gender strongly influences the perception and expression of intimacy in relationships. My finding about the gendered base of acts of intimacy concurs with findings from Strebel et al. (2006), who found that traditional gender power relations exist across many South African Coloured and Black low-income communities.

The discourse of gender and heterosexuality, that position men as more active in work and being providers while women were expected to stay at home to take care of household chores, such as cleaning and cooking (Boonzaier & De La Rey, 2003; Strebel et al., 2006). This corresponds with gender role constructions, and indicates the pervasiveness of traditional gender roles in communities, which involve women staying at home and men going to work (Strebel et al., 2006). These gender roles seem to endorse the gendered acts of care that both Coloured males and females expressed in their relationships.

## 6.5 Theme Five: Alcohol Disrupts Closeness

The implications of alcohol use and abuse emerged as a very strong category, trumping all other codes and categories in terms of the number of times participants referred to it. It seemed that alcohol abuse played a major role in the lives of many of my participants. They often referred to the prevalence of alcohol use/abuse in their homes and community.

Bella (Bennie's partner) (25, C): *"As I grew up I believed that alcohol was just part of the relationship. Here too there are many older people who drink at the shebeens [an informal place where strong alcohol is served in the community]. Some drink at their homes, but I would say many more people drink in their homes. Bennie said that his mom and dad drank. Sometimes when his father came home, his mother was drunk and then his father had to clean the house. "My parents drank a lot, my mom too. When my father came home she was out at her friends and he had to clean the house or cook."*

Carl (Cathy's partner) (60, M): *"What I see makes my heart ache, especially on a Sunday morning when the men in the community stand in little groupings, and then they buy marijuana and wine."* Cathy also indicated the following: *"Many young people steal/break in to get money for alcohol. They break in at the winery - where alcohol is kept. Here is no work, so they make an effort to get wine"*.

Karen (Karel's partner) (36, M) indicated that drinking is the norm in the community: *"There were about 30 men working on the farm. I would say only about two or three of the 30 men did not drink and whose households were not affected by alcohol. It almost seems as if the men took turns regarding who was going to beat up their children and wives."* Karel described his experiences and said: *"My mom and dad drank all their lives, it is only now that they are older that they do not drink that much."*

Ivan (Iris's partner) (49, M):

*"Here they drink non-stop. No they don't stop, they say it is their money; they can drink as much as they want to."*

Doris (Daniel's partner) (42, C):

*"The alcohol runs like water in this place! Men and women drink together at the shebeens. Sometimes they take the small children with them to the shebeens. I do not know where the people get the money to drink, but they drink! The men in this community always have money for wine."*

The people living in this research community had access to informal drinking places, such as local shebeens, where they could buy and/or consume alcohol. Sometimes both parents were involved in alcohol abuse, which set the stage for generational alcohol use, and abuse. According to Barry (2005), alcohol has played a central and often a controversial role in the life of many South Africans. Barry (2005) states that the average amount consumed by the average drinker in South Africa is one of the highest in the world. It was found by the South African Demographic and Health Survey of 1998 that most risky drinkers drink over weekends in public places, or as part of communal drinking. According to Setlalenta et al. (2010), in 1997 there were about 20 000 informal or community liquor outlets in South Africa (such as shebeens) and this figure has since doubled. These shebeens are unregulated and operate outside the confines of the law. This makes it easy for vendors to set up shebeens, and to provide considerable amounts of alcohol to members of the community. Alcohol is thus easily available to all ages and genders in this community, despite legal restrictions. Risk is caused by the availability of alcohol, and it can be argued that such contextual issues are salient in shaping the drinking behaviour of individuals (Setlalenta et al., 2010) in this and other Coloured communities (Sawyer-Kurian et al., 2010).

### 6.5.1 Community norms regarding alcohol

There appeared to be strong norms regarding men's drinking in this community, such as men drinking in groups. This communal drinking enabled men to have access to alcohol through the pooling of money. Even if a participant was only able to contribute two rand, he was still able to partake in the drinking rituals, as shown in the quotation below:

Eddie (Edwina's partner) (30, C) said that he and his friends drank together regularly: *"I drink from about seven o'clock at night. I drink about 3-4 beers. I normally drink with my friends. "*

Ivan (Iris's partner) (49, M):

*"All four men contribute, or sometimes one guy will buy for all of us. Sometimes I contribute when I get money from my wife. If I get R20.00 I will take R10.00 to contribute then every man will contribute R10.00. As long as you contribute you can drink. It does not matter how much you have; even a R2.00 as long as one contributes then one can drink."*

Drinking was also encouraged by other men, and men engaged in social drinking, as indicated by Johan (Johanna's partner) (Age 53, M):

*"It is the men on the farm whom I have worked with who will always call me to come drink with them. Then I will go with them. I normally drink with friends. When we drink we drink either at my house, their house or at the 'yard' [shebeen]."*

In this sample, alcohol was consumed predominantly by men. A few women (Avril, Bella, Edwina, Gertruida and Leonie) indicated that they drank, but only ciders or beers, and that they did not drink to a point of drunkenness. Their male partners confirmed that the women did not engage in heavy drinking. It seemed more socially acceptable for men than women to drink in this community, as evidenced in the next quotations.

Bennie (Bellás's partner) (24, C):

*"Here men can drink, but not the women, because if women drink it is seen as not proper. If she drinks then there are arguments between couples. Men can do what they want, but not the women. What men expect is that the women stay home and be a good wife."*

Eddie (Edwina's partner) (30, C), who came to the interview slightly intoxicated and who seemed to drink almost every day, had the following expectations of Edwina:

*"I have a problem with her when she is drunk. I make sure that she does not do that shit. I told her she can drink a little bit, but not to the extent where she falls around. No, that is not what I expect from her... No she can't go sit with me at the shebeen. She must stay home. What would it look like if we were both drunk? No she cannot fucking drink with me, oh no both of us can't drink!"*

Daniel (Doris's partner) (43, C), who regularly drank with his friends, said the following:

*"I am just glad that she is not a drinker".*

Different standards regarding alcohol use therefore seemed to apply to men and women. Traditionally it was not acceptable for native African women to drink alcohol. This coincides with Brown Travis and White's (2000) and Lips's (2006) argument that different racial and ethnic groups adhere to different norms, values and attitudes for men and women, and that social roles and expectations are more rigid for women than for men. This is also evident in the drinking norms of some of the neighbouring countries of South Africa. In Lesotho women are not allowed to drink alcohol at all, despite the fact that many are brewers and traders of traditional beer. "A woman who indulges in alcohol is subject to derision, condemnation and even divorce." (Setlalentoa et al., 2010, p. 29). In Zimbabwe, men even fought against what they termed "joint drinking" (p. 29) which means: they oppose women and men drinking together at the local beer halls. According to Setlalentoa et al. (2010), a South African study revealed such gender differences: men's drinking is deemed traditionally and acceptable, while women's drinking is frowned upon. The same double standards are prevalent in this and other Coloured communities in the Western Cape (Sawyer-

Kurian et al. 2010). Coloured men in the study conducted by Sawyer-Kurian et al. (2010) found that men too preferred their female partners not to drink nor to go to shebeens. Women who visit shebeens are deemed as easy targets for men's sexual advances, and are called derogatory names such as "sluts" and "bitches."

### 6.5.2 Alcohol abuse disrupts care and concern

It became clear that alcohol abuse often stood in the way of experiencing care and concern, and arguments regularly ensued upon the intoxicated men's return home.

Bella (Bennie's partner) (24, C), for example, indicated that Bennie's drinking and his friends interrupted their alone time, and that she did not want him near her when he was drunk:

*"Well I feel when he is drunk then he mustn't come home when I am sleeping. We argue mostly, because there are times when we are alone then his friends come to drink by him. Then when they are drunk they want to go to the shebeens. To me it feels that if he is drunk then he mustn't come home and disturb my sleep. I would tell him, "It is okay you can go, but I'm not going with. Just as long as you don't come wake me up, coz I don't like drunken people!" Then we would argue and I would say, "Look here you are drunk and you want to talk and I am sober and want to sleep", but he feels that he is not drunk. And that he only has a few beers in. Then I would say, "You have alcohol in you, and I have no alcohol in me, so I want to sleep." But then he would insist that he is not drunk. That is the time when we argue."*

Bennie (Bella's partner) (25, C) admitted that his drinking led to distance in the relationship as his partner stayed inside cooking, while he drank with his friends.

*" Yes, she wants me to stop the drinking. Then when I am sober on Sundays she will talk to me and ask me not to drink."*

*R: "If I may ask you.... Why do you drink?"*

*P: "I drink to enjoy myself."*

*R: "With whom do you drink?"*

*P: "With my friends. One of my friends lives across the street then when he comes to me, we will drink. We sit at the house and drink. We don't always drink at the house; sometimes we go to the 'yard' [shebeen]"*

*R: "And what does she do when you and your friends are drinking?"*

*P: "She sits inside or cooks the food inside."*

Doris (42, C) wanted more alone time to feel close to her partner, Daniel, and they often argued because her need to experience closeness with him was not satisfied. According to her, he preferred to go out drinking with his drinking friends.

*"I say to him: 'Don't go out, stay here with me! If you have to drink, go buy your beer or wine and come sit and drink here at home.' Because when he drinks he is unable to stop drinking. Then we argue over his drinking."*

Daniel and Doris' arguments resulted in less closeness: Daniel (43, C) said:

*"Then she sleeps in the bed with the child and I must sleep alone in on the couch in the lounge. This will go on for about three days, and then on the third day I will make jokes with her when I come from work. During this time she will also not put bread in for me when I go to work. She refuses to have anything to do with me, or to talk to me. Sometimes she will also not make any food."*

Separating herself and withholding her usual care from Daniel can be seen as Doris' way of expressing her disagreement with his drinking patterns and her attempt to change his behaviour (Matthee, 2001). Daniel (Doris's partner) (43, C) was well aware that his drinking behaviour upset her, but being with his friends was more appealing than staying at home with Doris:

*"She often gets angry about my drinking and my friends. She doesn't like them and she doesn't want me to drink after work. She wants me to buy beer and wants me to drink at*



*home. But it is so quiet at home. I don't want to drink in the house by myself. It's only my drinking that causes problems. She doesn't want me to go to the shebeen or to go drink at my friend's place. That is all she doesn't want in the relationship."*

Gertruida (Gerrie's partner) (24, C) indicated that she and her partner also argued over his excessive drinking and, like Edwina and Doris, she also separated herself from him during and after his drinking bouts:

*"Yes he drank every day, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, and then he might skip Wednesdays. Yes, he starts drinking after 19h00 in the evening. Cause he works during the day. After 19h00 then they will drink their beers. He drank almost every day. While he drinks I will go lay down.... Sometimes we argue and I will tell him straight he is an alcoholic! Because a normal person can't drink so much!... So when we argue I sometimes go to my mother when I am angry with him. Once I was away for two weeks, but then he would phone me to beg me to come back!"*

Although Gertruida was clearly upset with Gerrie's excessive drinking, Gerrie (42, C) painted a different picture. He did not see his excessive drinking as a problem and felt confident that he was in control and could stop at any time if he wanted to, as shown below:

*"I can stop drinking anytime I want, just like I quit the mandrax... Yes of course I can leave the alcohol. Like I told you I drank during the week, but then decided, 'No man, this drinking is just destroying you', so I stopped drinking during the week. So if I stopped the drinking during the week I can stop drinking over weekends."*

Gerrie did not mention any arguments with Gertruida about his alcohol use and seemed to be oblivious to how it impacted on their relationship.

Johan (Johanna's partner) (53, M) spoke about his daily alcohol use as a normal part of his life:

*"No. I have never drunk heavily. Yes, I drank, but not that much. If I had holidays at the end of the year, that is when I will take a dobbie [some wine]. I would buy a 5 litre bottle, but will drink two or three glasses at a time and then put it aside, because I was still working, but now I will drink wine every day, because I don't work anymore. Now I am home every*

*day. I have worked hard for 34 years. Now I drink with friends. When we drink we drink either at my house, their house or at the 'yard' [shebeen]."*

As indicated above, many women in the study (Bella, Doris, Edwina, Gertruida, Iris, Johanna and Mary) felt that their partner's alcohol use impacted negatively on them and their relationship. Women showed their dissatisfaction by withholding closeness and their care and concern, by either sleeping separately from their partners, or refusing to cook for their partner. However, these strategies on the part of the women did not have any long-term effect, and men did not change their behaviour. After a few days, couples would start talking again, but there was no real change in the relationship. This pattern would continue for years and even decades, as indicated by the older Iris and Johanna.

The male participants who abused alcohol seemed quite cavalier about their drinking. They did not present it as problematic behaviour, but saw it as an intrinsic and normal part of their lives. Some were aware of the unhappiness it caused their partner, but still prioritised drinking with their friends. It also seems that it is an acceptable norm for men to drink regularly and to enjoy the social aspects of drinking with their friends. This finding coincides with findings from Setlalentoa et al. (2010), who state that traditionally, in rural areas, alcohol served to strengthen friendship. These authors also point out that in South Africa, African and Coloured men's drinking is traditionally and currently viewed as a pleasurable, recreational and sensation-seeking activity. Men's drinking is encouraged by their peers, and heavy drinking symbolises masculinity (Setlalentoa et al., 2010). Hart (2013) also states that if men want to fit in and be perceived as adhering to the dominant masculine behaviour, they have to internalise and demonstrate the norms of the male community which is to participate in social drinking routines with other men.

Even if violence is not involved, alcohol abuse has a profound negative effect on those closest to the abuser, particularly the abuser's partner (Graham, Bernards, Wilsnack, & Gmel, 2011; Saatcioglu, Rashan & Duran, 2006; Stanley, 2008). Stanley (2012) found that Indian women married to alcoholics experience higher levels of conflict on a physical, psychological and sexual level. Murphy, O'Farrell, Fals-Stewart and Feehan (2001) also found that some alcoholic men are highly

prone to drink in response to relationship conflict. Given the lack of mental health resources in low-income South African communities, it is likely that interventions or treatments targeting relationship conflict are not readily available in this low-income, Coloured community.

### 6.5.3 Alcohol precedes physical abuse

Although only three women (Bella, Johanna and Karen) indicated that their partners' drinking led to physical abuse and emotional and psychological distress, it is important to include these accounts because they highlight the adverse effects of alcohol abuse on intimate relationships.

Bella (Bennie's partner) (25, C):

*"Once he hit me, but then I told him, "If you do that again, then I am not always going to forgive you."*

Bennie (24, C) acknowledged that his continued alcohol use affected his judgment and led to his violent behaviour and Bella's withdrawal from him:

*"She doesn't drink anymore, and when I am drunk then I just seek trouble and the alcohol makes me see things that are not true. Then I think that she has been with someone when it isn't true. That is when I hit her. The afterwards she will be angry, and she doesn't talk to me. She also cries and wants me to leave her alone."*

*R: "And how does her reaction make you feel?"*

*P: "It makes me feel... how I can say it...when she wants to be alone then I feel she is not interested in me."*

*R: "How does it feel when you get that feeling that she is not interested in you?"*

*P: "Then I think... it is not a good feeling, and then I leave her... so she can be alone."*

Johanna (Johan's partner) (60, M) mentioned that the physical abuse, which resulted from her husband's drunkenness, forced her to leave her house and sleep outside in an effort to avoid the escalation of physical abuse and to protect herself and her child:

*"So he drank at home and he was drinking and drinking. I was gone the whole day. That time he was still very difficult. My daughter was about 4 years old. There was food for him but he was upset, because he had to dish up for himself. That is how the physical abuse started. For the child's sake I had to sleep outside. Sometimes when he was drunk he pulled me around/man handled, but for the child's sake I left the house with the child, because I wanted to protect myself and the child."*

She described how his drinking distressed her even long after the incident:

*"Those days he drank himself to a pulp. This greatly worried me as it can be very dangerous to come home drunk. I cannot tell you how much this has stressed me. It was very traumatic to me. I was worried that he would be lying dead next to the road. Those days I used to worry a lot about his safety. I would try to be strong not to let on to my daughter, but it was very stressful. The abuse also caused much stress to me.... Some nights I couldn't even sleep and I lie awake thinking. Then I ask myself, "Why do I feel like this?"....There is something wrong... but I don't know how to describe it.... Now many times when he lies there drunk, then it is those things that hurt me."*

Johan (Johanna's partner) (53, M), however, claimed that he never physically abused his wife.

*"The worst argument we had was once when she made me angry, and when she by accident lifted my arm.... I pulled her arm; I didn't pull it hard... just shoved it away, when she turned her head so the.... thing went into her eye and it gave her a blue eye. She went to work like that and the more she told the people... "My husband did not hit me", the more they did not want to believe her. She had a blue eye, but immediately wore sunglasses."*

Karen (Karel's partner) (36, M) also related that her experiences of physical and verbal abuse in their home caused her feelings of anxiety:

*“Once he came from the shebeen and he was swearing outside. No one fucks with me! He then forcefully kicked the door of the house open. The children and I were in the house. He threw the door closed and said nobody fucking talk to me or I will fuck you all up! I then got up and scolded him to keep his troubles outside and not to bring it home. That is when he hit me. I still have the knock here on my head where he hit me and where the blood was oozing from. Yes, currently hey... it has such an effect on me. The physical abuse provokes anxiety. During a confrontation with him I become anxious. I will pretend to be strong, but inside I am falling apart.”*

Karen (36, M) indicated that these feelings of anxiety were now transferred to other situations in which she was not involved.

*“Any confrontation with others, I will experience this anxiety. For example if two people start arguing in my presence, I will become highly anxious. Even if the argument does not involve me, I will become anxious. Even if I try to suppress those anxious feelings, it will still affect me. It is the physical abuse that has caused it.”*

Karel (Karen’s partner) (39, M), on the other hand, did not mention the physical abuse that his partner spoke about. He claimed that their conflict was related to him not working or contributing financially. According to him, Karen was the violent one.

Karel (Karen’s partner) (39, M):

*“I don’t swear because there are children in the house. We might have harsh words to say to each other, but we don’t swear or haul each other over the coals. Sometimes when I get home from my friends or drunk then the trouble starts. One time I was still approaching the home so she started throwing things around. She went totally crazy [he laughs]. When she is like that I am not able to go into the house.”*

Karen (Karel's partner) (36, M) revealed the following:

*"Honestly speaking, I can't reach an orgasm; it happens maybe once a year because my mind is not there! My mind is on all the problems! You cannot trust what he says. The one minute he promises me and the children that he will not drink again, but as soon as his brother-in-law comes by then he starts drinking again. You can't trust him at all."*

Karel (Karen's partner) (39, M) admitted that his wife was not interested in his physical or sexual advances towards her. Even though he tried to talk to her or sought physical closeness, she rejected his attempts and would sometimes leave their bedroom to sleep with the children. This lack of closeness between them could continue for months. It made him feel that he had no control over the situation, but he was adamant that things would improve once he got a job:

*"If I was drunk and she is angry... It takes about a month to a month and a half before there is any form of sexual activity. I don't really sleep well during this time. If I approach her she will kick me here and there. It seems like a thorn bush I have to get close to. She would kick me away. I will try and talk nice to her to get close to her, but then she will sometimes jump up and leave the bed to go lie with the children."*

It is evident that alcohol had a negative impact on the couple relationships portrayed above. Similar findings emerged in a review conducted by Marshall (2003) who indicates that there is a considerable amount of Western literature, which establishes linkages between alcoholism, marital dissatisfaction and discord experienced by the spouse. Other South African research also highlighted the negative link between alcohol and physical abuse (Abrahams et al., 2004; Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005; Setlatlenta, 2010). However, the female participants in this study remained in the relationship irrespective of the prevailing alcohol, verbal and physical abuse. Abrahams (2002) proposes that low levels of education and limited opportunities for equality in the workplace may prevent women from leaving abusive relationships.

The complexities of some of the participating couples' relationships are noteworthy. For instance, Johanna spoke positively and fondly of her partner during the first part of the interview and then, surprisingly, revealed IPV later on in the interview. Other women such as Bella, who reported

having a positive and intimate relationship with her partner, also raised concerns and negative feelings about their male partners' alcohol use. This demonstrates that positive and negative feelings can be held simultaneously in relationships. The wives of alcoholic and violent husbands in Boonzaier and De La Rey's (2003) study also described their husbands and their relationship as normally good, and viewed alcohol and IPV as a distinct and separate negative part of their intimate relationship. Boonzaier and De La Rey (2003) report on this complex, entwined relationship between love and violence in heterosexual relationships. Contradictory depictions seem to allow women to acknowledge both the alcohol use and violence, and the nonviolent and sometimes loving characteristics of their partners. It is also possible that the women in my study emphasised the positive side of their relationships in order to rationalise why they stay in the relationship. Shaifali (2009) found that the quality of an intimate relationship and the reasons for staying might be based on the frequency of everyday positive interactions as perceived by an individual. Thus, the number and quality of good times over the bad times might affect the overall feelings of happiness and the extent of closeness that one experiences in general (Shaifali, 2009).

## **6.6 Theme Six: Family of Origin and Constructions of Intimacy**

### **6.6.1 Fathers**

A theme that runs throughout participant stories is the presence of parents in their accounts of care and concern in their intimate relationships. Both men and women, indicated that their fathers were generally not available or open to conversations about love relationships.

Eddie (Edwina's partner) (30, C):

*"If my girlfriend and I made out I couldn't ask him what to do, because he was drunk and rude all the time. So from him [my father] I learned fucking nothing!"*

Johan (Johanna's partner) (53, M):

*"My father was there, but he took his doppie [wine], but he didn't really talk to us and we didn't talk to him about things like that [sex]."*

Noeline (Noel's partner) (37, M) also indicated that her fear for her father prevented her from talking to him about personal issues:

*"I never felt free to talk to him about something or a problem I may have had. I was too scared to talk to him. I wanted him to be there if I wanted to talk to him about anything, but he was never there."*

Participants also indicated that they did not experience their fathers as caring. The wish and longing for a nurturing, available and loving father is implied in the responses below:

Carl (Cathy's partner) (60, M):

*"Our father didn't have time for us".*

Eddie (Edwina's partner) (30, C):

*"He was never like a father. I didn't get any fatherly love from him."*

Freddie (Freda's partner) (66, M):

*"I missed that physical and emotional contact with him. He didn't give our mother or us any love, instead he was really rude to us. It was almost as if he wasn't part of our family. His time he shared with his friends. He didn't really have a life with us, because Friday nights he would go away and only come back Saturday mornings. Then he would go away again the Saturday afternoon and only come home the Sunday evenings and when he did come home he would be rude to us."*

Noeline (Noel's partner) (37, M):

*"No, my father was never there for me. I never got any love from him. No, never! "*



Karel (Karin's partner) (39, M):

*"There was very little love. He didn't give me love..."*

When they spoke about their fathers, most participants indicated that their fathers drank excessively, and because of the alcohol, they were physically or emotionally absent in their lives and did not provide care, protection or love to their children.

Johanna (Johan's partner) (60, M):

*"My father drank a lot! And when he was drunk then he just laid down. That is all he did [says it with disappointment]."*

Karel (Karin's partner) (39, M):

*"We were too scared to come home. So we tried to play away from the house as long as possible. Some nights when we got home, our father would be sleeping in his drunkenness. We knew the routine: he would get home drunk, then go lay down and would wake up later from his drunkenness."*

Gertruida (Gerrie's partner) (24, C):

*"When my father came home he was always drunk."*

Ivan (Iris's partner) (50, M) implied a silent acceptance of his father's drinking. He did not feel that he could do anything about his father's routine drinking pattern. The way he spoke of his father's drinking, it was as if it was the norm, as if his daily drinking was nothing out of the ordinary:

*"He drank almost every day. Every day he had his liquor with him. He was okay, he didn't bother us much."*

Karel (Karin's partner) (39, M) indicated that his father's drinking led to a breakdown in communication and affection in their family and involved violence in the home:

*"My father was an awful man... There was very little love and communication in the house. When he got home he used to beat up my mother."*

Johanna (Johan's partner) (60, M):

*"I would have loved for my father not to drink. When he didn't drink he was a wonderful man, but the alcohol made him drink a lot with the other farm workers. When he came home he was ugly and violent... and he use to beat up on my mother."*

Even when fathers were physically present and sober, participants indicated that there was not much communication between father and child. Johanna (Johan's partner) (60, M) said of her father:

*"He [father] didn't talk much to us. He was a very quiet man when he was sober."*

Ivan (Iris's partner) (49, M) added:

*"When he was sober he didn't talk much to us."*

Although most participants reported that their fathers drank excessively, there were only three participants, such as Doris, who reported that her father did not drink at all: *"My father and mother were church going people and they did not drink."* This suggested that heavy drinking was the norm for the families of many participants, and that those whose fathers did not adhere to this norm were proud of the fact.

Johan (53, M) (Johanna's partner), for example, spoke proudly of his father's non-violent behaviour and the absence of excessive drinking:

*"He kept his drinking to himself. My father was never aggressive or a violent man. That is one thing I can say about him! He was also not a man who made trouble or who was a nuisance to them. My father loved to be happy."*

Henry (Hanlie's partner) (36, M):

*"My father drank, but not a lot. He loved to listen to his radio and to listen to sport on Saturdays."*

The quotations above indicate that most fathers were absent from the lives of their children due to excessive drinking patterns. Even when they were physically present, they did not play a major role in nurturing them into young men or women. It suggests that fathers in this low-income Coloured community spent very little time nurturing their children. This coincides with Nelson's (2004) study which found that children under the age of 13 years spent less time with their low-income fathers than children whose fathers had a high income.

Even when fathers were more present, participants indicated that they had very little verbal interaction with their fathers, and that they did not receive much instruction and care from their fathers. Fathers were physically, and to a large extent, emotionally absent from their children's lives. Findings in South Africa suggest that the absent father is the source of many societal ills, and that biological fathers are critical for the psychological and mental development of boys growing into young men (Clowes, Ratele & Shefer, 2013). However, Clowes et al. (2013) also highlights the importance of the nurturing practices of social fathers (grandfathers, uncles and neighbours). Researchers in the South African literature are increasingly recognising that that fatherhood is socially constructed, not purely biologically determined (Clowes et al., 2013; Morrell, 2006). Clowes et al. (2013) postulates that fatherhood is a key signifier of successful masculinity, therefore has more to do with the social construction of masculinity than with the reproductive process. Clowes et al. (2013) argue that for the majority of South African men, due to poor fathering, achieving successful masculinity through fatherhood is challenging. For this reason, fathers and fatherhood have emerged as key concerns in critical men's studies/masculinities studies in South Africa over the last few years (Clowes et al., 2013; Richter & Morrell 2006).

Other studies across the world show that compared to mothers, fathers spend considerably less time with their children (Lips, 2006). Levant (2011) also points out that studies that focus on masculinity need to highlight and problematise male restrictive emotionality in relationships. Levant (2011)

raises the concern that fathers' emotional and physical absence from their children's lives is due to male gender role socialisation processes which promote women as the nurturer and carer of the family, while men are seen as providers. It was also found that women were more able to talk about their feelings than men, possibly due to men's inability to talk about their emotions (alexithymia). This provider mentality of men greatly hinders or excuses men from forming strong emotional bonds with their children.

As can be seen below, some (six) other participants felt that their fathers cared about them, but they were in the minority to those who felt that their fathers did not care about them.

Henry (Hanlie's partner) (36, M):

*"My father came to watch me play soccer on a Saturday, and then he would come to the field. He was always there for us. He always worked and provided for us. I had a very good relationship with my father. Especially in the afternoon when I came from school my mother would send me to take him some coffee where he was busy ploughing the farm with the tractor. I always took him some coffee and then I'll spend some time with him [he smiles when thinking about this father]. Those were very special moments for me [starts becoming emotional]. Yes, I miss my father very much. Just thinking about him, makes me cry. He always went out of his way to give me what I needed. Yes, I miss him so much, because the times when he was around I could talk to him about anything."*

Gertruida (Gerrie's partner) (24, C) indicated that she missed the caring relationship she had with her father:

*"I had a good relationship with my father; he played with me, spoke to me, and took me out, sometimes he would take me to his work. When he came home then he would come and talk to me. He would ask me if I was okay. He would ask if I had washed and had food to eat, and he would ask me how my day was. He at least showed that he was interested in me! He was always there for me, and he showed me that he cared about me. He used to bring lots of ham from the factory where he worked. It is something I missed when he left."*

Gerrie (Getruida's partner) (42, C)

*"My father hit me a lot, but I was also very naughty. But today I understand and I am happy that he disciplined me. Discipline made me a better person. My father cared about me that is why he disciplined me."*

Ivan (Iris's partner) (49, M):

*"I had a lovely relationship with my father. He was a loving father, even though he drank, but he did not drink that much, but he was also there for us. He provided for us. Yes, he was there for us. If I had a problem I could go to him, whether he had an answer or not, but we could always go and speak to him. For example, if somebody hit me, I could tell him, then my father would go see parents of the child who has hit him to sort it out. He wouldn't hit the parents, he would go talk to them. He will talk it out and ask that parent must rebuke his own child, he would then walk away."*

Johan (Johanna's partner) (53, M):

*"When we as brothers argued then my brother who was my father's favourite, would go cry to him, but then my father would first ask me what happened. My father was a fair man - he disciplined also his favourite child when needed. If father was told of the detail of the incident he would understand. He was a good man."*

Johanna (Johan's partner) (60, M):

*"My father taught us how to be a woman. When we came in the house improperly, he would send you out again and demand that you come in properly, walk up straight, and greet. We were taught to come in, and to ask decently what you wanted. He taught me to do ballroom dancing on the old gramophone. There were some happy memories."*

According to my participants' accounts, fathers who drank less and who were more present in the lives of their children were able to maintain more positive relationships with their children than those fathers who drank excessively. South African research by Nelson (2004) indicates that when low-income fathers spent more time with their children, it protected them from teenage pregnancies,

helped children perform better academically and have better social and emotional relationships. North American researchers Bradford and Hawkins (2006) also point out the importance of nurturing fathering in the construction of children's ability to nurture others. They state that a loving, committed relationship between parents helped to create a context in which traits supportive of caring fathering were likely to be learned by children (Bradford & Hawkins, 2006). A challenge that most of my male participants faced was: how do they become a caring, nurturing father, if they have not learned these traits? The challenge of men being raised without fathers is to be investigated further in this Coloured community.

As we have seen, some participants also described their fathers as caring for them by providing, protecting and disciplining them. This also reflects South African findings (Clowes et al., 2013). Clowes et al. (2013) who investigated fatherhood amongst, Black, White and Coloured boys, postulate that the idea of successful fatherhood reinforces the centrality of breadwinning and protecting as part of masculinity. Clowes et al. (2013) argues that the roles of protector and provider are part of the power relations that are inherent in the position of head of the home (Clowes et al., 2013). Participant Johanna (60, M) also spoke about her father as their disciplinarian, who instructed them to be "*proper, decent and a better person.*" This portrays the construction of men as head and leader of the home (patriarch), which incorporates notions of leadership, power, strength, dominance and control. Clowes et al. (2013), however, argues that given local and global social, economic, and political changes, it is an increasingly unsustainable aspiration for the future to conceptualise men as sole breadwinners and autonomous household heads. It is advocated that such gendered expectations are, furthermore, harmful to men and women, as well as their children, with respect to the pressures it puts on men and the relationships between men and women in a society in which gender equity is a constitutional requirement. This means challenging the traditional notions of masculinity as a social location expressed through power over others; a location from which violence is legitimized.

My participants expressed a need and longing to have had fathers who would have taken the time to talk to them about issues related to relationships and intimacy. For many, this was not the case. This coincides with Nelson's (2004) findings that South African fathers seldom talk to their sons and daughters about relationship-related topics. Levant et al. (2006) argue that male role socialisation

processes may limit the development of these abilities, and that many men are ill-prepared for playing nurturing roles (Levant et al., 2006). Levant (2011) proposes that a new psychology of men is needed that will assist men in connections with their loved ones. My study indicated that male participants struggled to express their feelings, whilst women easily expressed their feelings, which suggests that women might be able to make emotional connections more easily than men.

### 6.6.2 Mothers

In the absence of many biological fathers, most participants presented their mothers as caring individuals and primary role models for how to love and care:

Carl (Cathy's partner) (60, M): *"Oh Miss, my mother was very loving. She showed us how much she loved us; she could not have loved us three boys more than she did"*. Cathy also had a good relationship with her mother as demonstrated by their living in the backyard of her mother's house. She said: *"My mother and I and my sisters are very close."*

Doris (Daniel's partner) (42, C):

*"My mother... I really loved my mother. She was the one who supported me through my pregnancy. I was a very sickly person through my pregnancy. She was the one who took me to hospital and supported me, not out of duty, but because she loved me."* Daniel also indicated that he had a very good relationship with his mother: *"My mother and I was very close, she was always there for me, she always supported me."*

Freddie (Freda's partner) (66, M):

*"My mother loved us and she spoiled us. Even when I was married she would pull me close and hug me"*. Freda also indicated that she had a good relationship with her mother and indicated that her mother was the one who gave them advice, such as not having sex too early as she might get pregnant.

Other partners also indicated that they had a good relationship with their mothers.

Ivan indicated that his mother held a special place in his heart. He felt supported and protected by his mother:

*“To me she was always a lovely person. Oh yes she was a lovely person. There was never any trouble from my mother’s side. She always took our side, but she would also discipline us if we were naughty. I always stayed close to her as a child. Yes, I was very close to my mother.”*

Johanna (Johan’s partner) (60, M) admired the love and care her mother had for them:

*“My mother was always gentle and full of love for us. My mother was a lovely person. Still today my mother still gives if I have a need”. Johan also indicated that his mom was a very nurturing person. “My mom was always there for us.”*

Noel (Noeline’s partner) (36, C):

*“My mother showed her love, because she was always concerned about me. When it came to money things were difficult, but she would always give if she had. If she didn’t have I would accept it, because I knew she loved me.”*

Gerrie (Gertruida’s partner) (42, C):

*“My mother loves me very much. I think it is because I am the only boy in the house. My mother was not like other women, who kept them busy with other people’s business. She kept to herself and to the things that concern her children. Like a mother should, she cared for her children.”*

Most participants indicated that they had a good relationship with their mother while they were still living in their parent’s home. Mothers were described as loving, caring, and nurturing. This finding



concur with Harach and Kuczynski (2005) who noted that both boys and girls reported that they had more intimate relationships with their mothers.

The good relationship many participants shared with their mothers facilitated participants following the instructions of their mothers. North American research in low-income African-American Black families also reveals that mothers and grandmothers were found to play an important role in the nurturing and caring of children when fathers were physically absent either through choice or incarceration (Weaver, 2011). Harach and Kuczynski (2005) also point out that stay-home mothers are more involved in the day-to-day caregiving of their children, compared to fathers.

Freud contributed to our understanding of how early childhood relationships and experiences may influence intimacy in adulthood (Waldinger et al., 2003). He introduced the concept of transference in intimacy, and suggested that each person develops a central relationship pattern, which encompasses the frustrations, wishes, longings and expectations left over from earlier unsuccessful attempts at need gratification (Waldinger et al., 2003). This implies that experiences are transferred from earlier relationships to later ones. Attachment theory also proposes that earlier relationships greatly influence our ability to form intimate adult relationships, and influence the expectations of love and caring that we hold in later adult relationships (Cassidy, 2001; 2008). According to attachment theory, the individual develops an internal working model of relationships based on interactions with his/her parents, and transfers this model to his/her intimate relationship. From this internal working model, the individual develops and includes beliefs of his/her ability to be loved and expectations around the responsiveness of others (Cassidy, 2001; Schaeffer, 2005; Waldinger et al., 2003). Given the theorised link between an individual's own experience with early primary caregivers and later adult love relationships, it may be useful if further relationship research in this community explores how early attachment relationship experiences relate to adult relationships.

### **6.6.3 Mothers based their teachings of gendered roles on biology**

Men relayed that their mothers taught them that they were physically stronger than women; they therefore had the duty to protect women and perform the tasks in the home that required more

strength. It seems that these teachings played a role in men's construction of love and care as indicated in the performance of tasks for their partner when and as she needed it, which is illustrated in the quotations below:

Ivan (Iris's partner) (49, M):

*"My mother would say, "Remember a woman is a woman and man is a man. You are stronger. She always taught my sisters to be good cooks and to clean the house."*

Andre (Avril's partner) (42, C):

*"My mother always said: You must protect and help your sisters and your partner."*

Henry (Hanlie's partner) (36, M):

*"My mother taught me never to hit my wife, but to help her, to care for her."*

Ivan (Iris's partner) (49, M):

*"My mother said: "Don't let your wife do the hard work. Take the hard things out of the wife's hand so she can do the lighter work."*

Women were taught by mothers and grandmothers to care for male partners through cooking, cleaning and being "decent" women. Hanlie (Henry's partner) (28, M), for example, who was raised by her mother and grandmother in the same house, said:

*"My grandmother taught me to always keep yourself neat and to be neat in your house. She taught us to clean the house and to make sure that everything is in order when your husband comes home. This is also how she always was."*

Doris (Daniel's partner) (42, C):

*"My mother taught me that woman must work well in the home and be decent like my mother was."*

Freda (Freddie's partner) (46, M):

*"We girls were taught that to be a good woman is to bake bread."*

Doris (Daniel's partner) (42, C):

*"I was taught to care for my partner like my mother cared for my father. Her role was to cook."*

Hanlie (Henry's partner) (28, M):

*"When my father came home his coffee was always ready, the house was clean and she made sure we did our homework and chores."*

To be a good wife, women were taught by their mothers to be submissive, obedient, respectful and supportive of their male partners. Women were infantilised as indicated in statements such as those around not "backchatting" as seen below:

Freda (Freddie's partner) (46, M):

*"You must be submissive to your husband. You must support him through thick and thin when you get married. Submissive to me means I must listen when he talks; you mustn't backchat. You are just supposed to do what he says, but I don't always agree. But that is all part of the marriage."*

Doris (Daniel's partner) (42, C):

*"I was taught that a woman should be supportive to her husband. I was taught that if I respect my husband my husband will respect me and if a woman loves her husband then the husband will love her."*

Cathy (Carl's wife) (60, M):

*"It is important to love and care for him. To be a good wife you must always support and listen to him and not backchat."*

Mothers seemed to play the dominant role in child-rearing in the original homes of my participants. This coincides with current anthropological and psychological research, which indicates that

women play the dominant role in child-rearing and teaching of sex roles in most societies (Lips, 2006; Schaffer, 2005). Lips (2006) adds that mothers who are not employed and who have a low education are the main gender role teachers for their children. From the quotations above, it is evident that these low-income Coloured mothers emphasised the biological disposition of male and female, and accordingly taught their children the ascribed gender roles. Morkel (2012) agrees that we learn from an early age in our families what boys and girls should do and later what women and men should do. In keeping with this finding, Salo (2003) found that older Coloured women in Manenberg typically make sure that the younger women keep indoors and attend to their domestic responsibilities. In this low-income Coloured community a good woman is characterised by her ability to raise her children well, and to run a respectable household. The mothers of my participants also appeared to contribute largely to the participants' understanding of the gendered demonstration of care and concern, another way in which women participate in constructing and maintaining hegemony masculinity (Morrell et al., 2013, Salo, 2003).

#### **6.6.4 Mothers set the religious tone in the home**

Mothers were portrayed as regular church-goers, and the spiritual leaders and moral compass in the family home. Mothers set a religious atmosphere in the home and insisted that the father respect the home as a dwelling of Christian principles, in which alcohol abuse was not allowed, as seen in the quotations below:

Ivan (Iris' partner) (49, M):

*"My mother was a very religious woman. She went to church regularly. In the evening my mother would read her Bible or pray for the family. When she got up in the morning she would pray again. That was her routine."*

Johanna (Johan's partner) (60, M):

*"My mother went to the charismatic church; she went to church every week. Where ever she went she sang religious hymns. Even the animals followed her around."*

Johan (Johanna's partner) (53, M)

*"My mother made us go to church a lot. She also went to church a lot and attended prayer meetings and would invite people to our house for prayer meetings and Bible study."*

Very few fathers were church-going or religious. Only Doris, Hanlie and Henry indicated that their fathers went to church with their mothers.

Doris (Daniel's partner) (42, C):

*"My father and mother went to church together. They were very religious people."*

Hanlie (Henry's partner) (28, M):

*"My father could not read, then we would read to him and then he would interpret the scriptures. My father was a very religious man."*

Henry (Hanlie's partner) (36, M):

*"In the evening my parents used to pray together."*

From the above quotes participants indicated that mothers played an important role as the religious leader in the house. My participants seem to admire their mothers who taught them religious values. According to Stringer (2009), for some mothers, religion and spirituality can create an opportunity, structure and context wherein mothering can take place. In such cases, mothers seized and capitalised upon religious and spiritual resources, and interpreted religion in ways that brought meaning to their role as mothers (Stringer, 2009). In this sample it was found that not many fathers were involved in religious practises. The above results correspond with research by Brodsky (2000) and Crawford-Sullivan (2008) which demonstrated that the majority of the low-income African-American mothers in their studies engaged religion as an active part of their parenting. These mothers prayed with and for their children, and they taught their children about religion at home. They prayed for themselves to be good parents and strongly desired for their children to be involved in churches (Crawford-Sullivan, 2008). It was also found that personal religious resources such as

prayer provided mothers with a sense of strength and comfort, which allowed them to respond more patiently and effectively to their children (Crawford-Sullivan, 2008). Other research (Kirkpatrick, 2012; Stringer, 2009) has also found that religion provides mothers with a framework and values to construct and better perform their role as mother.

#### **6.6.5 Intergenerational transmission of values**

Participants' accounts suggest that they learned about how to be in a relationship by observing their parents in their relationship. It is clear from the following quotations that they observed their parents performing traditional gender roles in their interactions with each other. Women, in particular, tended to refer to their fathers as the providers and not as an emotional and nurturing figure in their families, while men considered a good woman to be one who fulfils the gender role of cleaning, caring and cooking.

Hanlie (Henry's partner) (28, M), who was not working while her husband Henry was the main provider, says:

*"My mother never worked and my father worked on the farm. He was a tractor and truck driver for the farm."*

Daniel (Doris's partner) (43, C) remembered his mother as the person who cleaned the house, and that to him, constituted a good woman:

*"A good woman is a woman like my mother. She never complained. If something was dirty, she would clean it, she would never leave it like that."*

Andre (Avril's partner) (42, C):

*"Well my mother always worked, but she was always at home when my father got home from work in the evening. Then his wash water was ready; his coffee was ready; everything was ready for him! That is what I expect. Yes, she doesn't necessarily have to be the same,*

*but she must have more or less the same qualities similar to that. She must be there at home!”*

Getruida (Gerrie’s partner) (24, C), said that her father was the main provider in the house:

*“When my father came from work then he and his friends would sit outside drinking while my mother had to help me with my homework. She was also tired, but she still had to help me with my homework. They both worked. My father would provide for the house. He would buy us different cold meats from his work. My mother made sure we had clothing.”*

Johanna (Johan’s partner) (60, M) also admired her father for being a good provider:

*“My father was a good man because he provided for us. He worked on the farm, but he also made an extra effort to earn money. He planted vegetable and fruit gardens, like cabbage and strawberries. Then he would sell the vegetables and fruit to get money for us as children, and for our Christmas clothing.”*

#### **6.6.6 Some participants idealised their parents’ relationships:**

Bennie (Bellas’ partner) (24, C):

*“Every night he would give my mother..., he would give her a hug and he also sometimes would bring her a flower when he came from work.... Yes, he loved her.”*

Cathy (Carl’s partner) (60, M):

*“It was nice for me to see that my mother and father understood each other. They showed love towards each other. I never saw them having arguments. They went to church regularly and they showed much affection towards each other. He was very helpful in the house and he was a homely person; he didn’t go out much. My parents taught me to love my partner. If my mother needed anything, my father would go buy it for her. My father went out of his way to care for my mother.”*

This idealisation may be due to dissatisfaction with their adult relationships, as illustrated in Doris' case.

Doris (Daniel's partner) (42, C) observed her father helping her mother and demonstrating his love by celebrating special occasions, such as birthdays and Mother's Day, planning surprises or presenting small gifts, for example flowers:

*"My father and mother were like this... he always helped her with everything. He was always there for her... and if it was pension pay day he would take my mother out, and also on Mother's Day or on her birthday. He made her birthdays special and would plan surprises for my mother and then he would give me money to buy a cake. Or even just give her flowers out of the garden. My father really loved my mother! My parents were religiously going to church, so I also want that...."*

The characteristics that Doris (Daniel's partner) (42, C) emphasised in her story of her parents' relationship were the same as she desired in her current, unsatisfying relationship:

*"The most important things are that we trust, support and love each other, that we enjoy special times with each other. That is what I desire. Special times are when we are alone together. I want him to take me out, to make me feel special. I want him to go with me to church."*

Some participants, like Henry below, idealised their parents' relationship and aspired to have the same kind of relationship with their partners. Henry (Hanlie's partner) (36, M) grew up in a house in which Christian principles were dominant and where he observed a high level of care and concern, which he wanted to emulate:

*"He was never rude to my mother; he always had respect for her. My parents loved each other, they never argued or so. My father loved my mother. At night they would always pray together, especially my mother. I want to be like my mother. She was strong in her faith. It is because of my parents that I am a better person today."*



Henry said that he took his Christian role as a caring and loving father and husband seriously:

*“I will teach my son that to have a relationship is to love your wife, and not to lift his hands for her, 'cause this I never did in my relationships. You must appreciate and respect your wife. That's what I do and that's what I want my children to do. I also teach my little girl that the man who takes her must respect and appreciate her; that is how a man must be... For example, if she wants to go to her mother, then you have to go with her. Sundays you as the man must say: 'Let's go to church.' The two of you must be able to share things. That is important to me.”*

Freda (Freddie's partner) (46, M) observed a strong sense of togetherness in her parents' relationship: *“My parents did everything together, they always sat and talked to each other and they would tell us how my father had to walk over the mountain to date my mother.”* The idea that her parents did everything together seemed to have contributed to Freda's own relationship with her husband, as she also valued doing things together with her husband:

*“Yes to be with him is very important; we walk together, drink together, and sleep together, and we do everything together! We go to the shop or we go to the shebeen for a drink. We don't make too long; we buy our drink and then we return home. It's nice and cosy at the house. We don't have a TV so we talk; we make jokes, and laugh and then we go sleep. It is important that we get along well with each other and not fight.”*

Their accounts point towards the important influence of parents' couple relationships on my participants' intimate relationship constructions. Other national research (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005; Langa, 2010) and international research (Curran, Ogolsky, Hazen & Bosch, 2011) also suggests that spouses or partners learn about marriage from their observation of their own parents' marriage. For example, Snyder, Velasquez, Clark & Means-Christensen (1997) have found that young adults' marital and parental role attitudes are strongly correlated with the specific marital role attitudes of their parents. Similarly, Riggio and Weiser (2008) suggest that parental marital status may influence individuals' relationship attitudes and their strength.

Other North American researchers have widely researched the intergenerational transmission of marital attitudes between generations. Whitton, Rhoades, Stanley and Markman (2008) argue that there is a strong research base supporting the intergenerational transmission of negative aspects of parental relationships such as divorce. Riggio and Weiser (2008) base their argument on the basic principle of social cognition and relationship schema theories, which suggest that individuals build cognitive representations of critical events such as their parent's relationships, which they later rely on as bases for perception, interpretation, and behaviour in their own relationships. Swick and Freeman (2004) also propose that children learn through adult role models that provide them with visible schemas of how to love (Swick & Freeman, 2004). According to Swick and Freeman (2004), three elements are important in the learning of caring, loving and nurturing behaviour "(i) children are able to form images of caring as the norm (ii) children have examples of what caring is and how they can be caring and (iii) parents have a powerful venue for educating children about caring" (p. 4).

Both positive and negative aspects of the parental marriage can be transmitted across generations (Riggio & Weiser, 2008). South African research mainly focused on how the negative aspect of interpartner violence is transmitted through generations. In particular, studies found that South African young Coloured men who witnessed abuse of their mothers were more likely to perpetrate the same kind of violence in their relationship (Abrahams et al., 2004; Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005).

## **6.7 Theme Seven: Community Constructions and Norms**

Community norms/notions about how men and women should conduct themselves were both implicitly and explicitly conveyed in men and women's accounts of how men and women should love and care in intimate relationships, as shown in the following quotations.

Cathy (Carl's partner) (60, M):

*"To be a good wife in this community means women must not to drink. As a woman you must be loving and caring. Loving means women must be submissive to their husbands. It means to do what the husband says and not to do things against his will."*

Bennie (Bella's partner) (24, C) indicated that the community expected different things from the men and women:

*"Most men go out while the women sit at home. Most men do it. Men see other men do it and then they also do it, they think it must be like that. In this community one hears all the time, "You are the man, you can do and say what you please, and she is the woman, she doesn't have a say." That is what I have also learned from the community."*

Avril (Andre's partner) (36, C) experienced burdensome expectations from the community:

*"They expect a lot from a woman. The community expect woman to be home when husband or partner gets home to see to his physical needs. He might be hungry or thirsty. He may not have taken enough bread to work so now he will be hungry. Women must make sure everything is in order at home."*

The above quotations speak of the norms and roles expected of men and women in this Coloured community, especially those who are married. This matches Lips' (2006) argument that different cultures have different rules and expectations for men and women, and that such gender roles are socially constructed and culturally bound. In other words, such gender relations and roles are part of a particular culture and reflect a certain historical timeframe (Brown Travis & White, 2000; Cruz, 2003; Lips, 2006). Brown Travis and White (2000) note that different racial and ethnic groups adhere to different norms, values and attitudes for men and women. Within different racial and ethnic groups, the social script is different for men than for women, which means that different expectations are held for women and men (Brown-Travis & White, 2000; Lips, 2006).

However, it needs to be noted that these women were also contesting /protesting these notions by showing an awareness of the inequality imbedded in them. They were therefore not readily submitting and accepting such social expectations.

Avril also referred to other women's beliefs about women's roles and how it impacted on her:

*"Some women believe that when the man arrives home they need to stay busy. I do not understand the logic in this. I do not understand why I must still work when he is around, when I have been home the whole day. I have already finished my work! So why must I still work? It doesn't make sense to me."*

As already mentioned in theme one, under 'monogamy and fidelity', women also indicated that they received a message from male community leaders that implied that men's infidelity was excusable and that women were responsible for their male partner's fidelity, as shown below:

Leonie (Leon's partner) (24, C):

*"Our male teacher always told us that when men were asked, 'Why do you cheat on your girlfriend?' Then they would say, 'You see that girl has no interest in sex. If I get to her she is full of excuses; she is always tired, and says no wait... not now!' He told us that men go sleep around because girls do not want to give them sex. It boils down to the fact that the people believe that to show your partner you love him, you must give him sex."*

Religious leaders also instructed women to be sexually available and to keep men satisfied, or men would commit infidelity.

Bella (Bennie's partner) (25, C):

*"Our pastor one day told us in church that sometimes when the man comes home, women tend to turn their backs when men ask for sex, then women tend to say, 'No, I am tired.'. He said that is when the man goes and visits another woman for sex. So if you don't want your man to visit another woman, then I must keep him happy!"*

Iris (Ivan's partner) (51, M):

*"The priest told us that I have to give him sex, because if I don't then he will go find it somewhere else. Like he said: 'You may have sex three times in a the week, but all of a sudden the man doesn't bother with you that often anymore then you as the woman must know there is something wrong'."*

As also mentioned in theme one, under 'monogamy and sex', it must also be noted once again that the community leaders mentioned by my participants were male teachers and preachers who seemed to teach women about the sexual needs of men, and women's roles in fulfilling these sexual needs. It seemed as though these community leaders reinforced the notion that men's needs should be satisfied to keep them faithful in the relationship, casting women as responsible. This reflects how the ruling ideas of masculinity and femininity are deployed in this Coloured community through influential groups, people and institutions (for example, schools, community leaders and churches). According to Ratele et al. (2014), such people or institutions push or draw individuals into the mainstream of gendered power relations, which is evident in this low-income Coloured community.

### **6.7.1 Community pressure to be and stay married**

I have already referred to in theme one, under 'marriage as the ideal context for sexual activity' that marriage was held in high esteem by both males and females. Community discourse and norms encouraged unmarried people to get married and the married to stay married. For example, although Iris (Ivan's partner, 50 years old) was frustrated with her alcohol-drinking husband who did not have a job and who spent the money she gave him on alcohol, divorce was not an option for her. She was determined to remain in the marriage, as evidenced below:

*"A highlight was when we got married. I am very happy that I am married. The day we got married I made my vows and I told him that I never want to hear about divorce, because it took me a long time to get to this point to get married. I waited a long time, so I always tell him, 'I don't want to hear about divorce. I don't believe in divorce.'"*

Johanna (Johan's partner) (60, M) said that due to the vows that she made, she would not leave her partner:

*"No! Never! I don't think I will leave him. I promised the priest to stay with him at the pulpit! Look the preacher said, 'til death separates you."*

Karen (Karel's partner) (36, M) affirmed that the vows she made kept her committed to her relationship and that she would only be free of the commitment if her partner left her:

*"Oh, no! It's because of the promise, the vows that I made! I can't! It is like... I can't leave him! I can go through hell, but I won't leave him, but if he comes to me tomorrow and tells me he doesn't think he sees his way in the marriage, and then I will let him go if it comes from his side. I will let him go with ease!"*

Some men also took their marriage vows seriously and intended to stay married. Johan (Johanna's partner) (53, M), for example, had this to say:

*"I feel 'til death do us part. Come what may, I promised the dominee [priest], so I must keep my promises. I don't believe that I will divorce her."*

Churches are successful at fostering stronger investments in relationships in this Coloured community, perhaps by highlighting the importance of marriage and fidelity. A strong influence of the Christian church on attitudes, beliefs and expectations regarding romantic relationships was also found by Engelbrecht (2009) in the same community from which participants in this study were drawn. These religious beliefs seem to be culturally deployed and reflect the discourse prevalent within the culture to which individuals are exposed. It can be argued that the beliefs and behaviours of individuals are influenced by a variety of contextual factors such as religion that define appropriate behaviour for my participants (Harding, 2007).

Religious socialisation also influences the importance that the couples in this particular community attached to marriage and determined the extent to which they experienced feelings of guilt for non-compliance to religious norms. It could be argued that the importance that is placed on the concept of marriage is very much influenced by religion. Lips (2006) also stated that marriage is rooted in a cultural context consisting of expectations and norms that determine various marital and interpersonal processes.

On the negative side, marriage vows kept married women such as Johanna (60, M) and Karen (36, M) committed to relationships burdened by alcohol, physical and emotional abuse. When asked for their reasons for remaining in their marriages, these women stated that by staying in the relationship they honoured and obeyed their religious beliefs and God. This supports Boonzaier's (2003) finding that in Coloured and Black communities, divorce is frowned upon, and that in many Christian homes in which violence took place in the marriage, women would stay with their partners to portray a respectable image. Boonzaier (2003) also found that when women approached religious leaders for assistance with problems of violence, they were encouraged to stay in the relationship. In this community, priest and ministers were seen as God's authority figures, whose teachings they had to adhere to. If the ministers and therefore the Church leadership encouraged women and men to stay in the relationship irrespective of abuse, it could lead to uncritical acceptance of abuse. However, not all the women in this study uncritically accepted abuse. Bella (25, C) said that she would hit back if Bennie (24, C) struck her. Iris (51, M) also indicated that she did not tolerate any abuse from her husband. This indicates that some semi-rural Coloured women contested, even though only verbally in the interviews, the notion of abuse and male dominance through violence. This coincides with Salo (2003) who argues that different femininities and masculinities may co-exist in the same communities.

It has to be noted though that forms of patriarchalism (i.e. the notion that men are dominant in man-woman relationships) seem to be part of some of the teachings of the church. This, together with strong images that God is male, affords men many privileges and power, but importantly, it also comes with the expectation that women should consent to and reproduce those male relations of power (Hearn, 2004). Van der Watt (2007) directs our attention to the use of gender images of God

in the church through gendered language. Van der Watt (2007) says that contemporary theological writers propose “that a particular image of God is as much an identification of ourselves, as it is of the divine” (p. 324). Van der Watt (2007) argues that given that human knowledge is conceptual and analogical, images of God will reflect the paradigms of those doing the imaging. For this reason, theologians suggest that a re-imaging of God must occur in order to promote justice for those outside the dominant power class of patriarchy (Van der Watt, 2007). This is necessary because there is an obvious and direct correlation between a God who is primarily imaged as masculine and injustice toward oppressed peoples. Restructuring of the God-image will necessarily have to include the representation of God-languages that are more inclusive and that would project God as in a nurturing, loving, sustaining relationship to humanity and the world, and get men and women to follow this direction (Van der Watt, 2007). Summarising the Leeuwen (1993), Van der Watt outlines the alternatives of re-imaging God broadly into four groups: “[1] proposals calling for a female deity, [2] proposals calling for inclusion of feminine imagery with masculine imagery for God, [3] proposals calling for non-gender-related imagery, and [4] proposals calling for a great variety of imagery, both gendered and non-gendered” (p. 326). Van der Watt (2007) states that the general reason for these four proposals is toward a view of God that emphasises God’s relationality, liberating power, and nurturing capacity. It is evident that it will not be an easy task to deconstruct the gender images that have dominated the church and the identity of many male laypeople, and that this is an on-going debate in theological circles.

### **6.7.2 Economic reasons for entering and remaining in relationships**

For many women, staying and committing to the relationship could be economically motivated as shown in the following quotations.

Avril (Andre’s partner) (36, C):

*“I don’t work at the moment. He at least still works for us.”*

Edwina (Eddie’s partner) (30, C):

*“I don’t have a job, so he will buy the nappies and the milk for the child and we live with my parents.”*



Freda (Freddie's partner) (46, M):

*"I only work Fridays; I char. He works on the farm. He provides for me."*

Gertruida (Gerrie's partner) (24, C):

*"It is not about the money, but he is a good provider and a good worker. He provides for me and I help in the house to clean."*

Hanlie (Henry's partner) (28, M):

*"I don't work at this moment. He is the only one working, but I pray for a job so I can help him. We would like to buy a house."*

Johanna (Johan's partner) (60, M):

*"I don't think I will leave him, and where would I go? I have nowhere to go. No one wants to help you. He still buys some food for the house. The children have their own life. He buys meat, vegetables like big potatoes and R100 electricity when he gets paid and the rest of the money is his. I don't even ask about his money, because I know that is also very little. When I get paid I buy electricity from my money and the rest of my money goes for food."*

The female participants in this study were mostly uneducated or had little formal education, and had few opportunities to improve their skills to enhance their employability. Many women earned less money than men and their work was mainly seasonal, leaving them with limited job security (see 5.4). Strebel et al. (2006) found that with the high rate of poverty, unemployment and a culture in which men have been favoured on farms in terms of jobs and income, many women were dependent on male partners for financial support. The existence of this power imbalance in this Coloured community, which is rooted in stereotypical gender roles, has been reported frequently in the relevant literature (Engelbrecht, 2009; Furphy, 2011). It can be argued, that some of the women in this sample stay in abusive relationships, because they have little or no earning or financial power, and have no choice but to stay. Engelbrecht (2009) similarly found that Coloured female farm workers in the this community earned less per week than men and that, in most cases, the female farm workers worked fewer weeks or months per year. Such wage differentials between female and male farm workers seem to give male partners more control over income and paves the way for

economic factors to be significant in shaping heterosexual intimate relations in poor semi-rural and other Coloured communities (Engelbrecht, 2009; Salo, 2003).

Most urban and semi-rural women who do not have work were economically dependent on their male partner to sustain them and their children. For this reason many women decided on a partner with the hope that he would provide for them, opening the door to transactional relations with men. Similarly, Coloured women in an urban Coloured community formed transactional intimate relationships in their struggle to obtain the material resources that would allow them to break free from the poverty in the local community of Mannenberg (Salo, 2003). As discussed in detail in chapter 3, transactional relationships occur in communities and situations in which women have intimate relationships with men in order to attain material benefits (Hunter, 2002). While men benefit from transactional intimate relationships through sex, they also gain status within their peer groups when they are seen with attractive women. Such men are envied by their peers and regarded as sexually successful (Hunter, 2002). In addition, men also benefit from women through their services, such as cooking and other comforts associated with the home (Hunter, 2002). In intimate relationships in the poorer African communities, the exchange of material goods and services are often used as a way of expressing commitment and the practice is not necessarily exploitative, as is often assumed (Masvawure, 2010). Hunter (2002) argues that through the relatively economically privileged position of men, women thus have access to more financial resources, such as income and housing. Together with the deliberate action of some women to pursue men for material gain, this has contributed to creating a mutually beneficial relationship for partners living in relative poverty.

## **6.8 Summary of participants' intimacy experiences and expressions**

Utilising thematic analysis, and applying a constructionist orientation to investigate the meanings and experiences of intimacy for men and women, seven major themes emerged and were identified. It was found that men's and women's patterns of intimate behaviour are driven by context.

The first theme centred on the meaning men and women in the study attached to the word “intimacy”. It was found that both genders understood this to be closeness, to be together and to do things together. In their accounts, both men and women emphasised closeness in terms of doing household chores together. Couples also found closeness through spiritual, social and recreational activities. Men emphasised the activity interactions they shared with their partners while women also mentioned activity interactions, but tended to emphasise the emotional experience of being together.

The second theme – sex and intimacy highlighted that sex is the most intimate individuals feel with their partners. Women emphasised the emotional connection they felt with their partner more than men did. Women were also more expressive and detailed in their accounts of their sexual experiences, while most men tended to provide brief factual information, avoided the topic of sex or their non-verbal gestures indicated their unease with the subject. Marriage was highlighted as the ideal context for heterosexual activities. Fidelity was mentioned as an important part of the monogamous relationship. Even though it was mainly men who indicated that they initiated sex, some women also veered off the dominant norm and indicated that they initiated sex. This indicated that women in different age groups had different ideas of what constituted sexuality and femininity. Contrary to popular discourse that men struggle with monogamy, most men indicated that they were monogamous and diverted from the traditional hegemonic masculinity. Such deviations from traditional norms suggest reorganisations of alternative femininities and masculinities in this community.

The third theme - closeness in talking – indicated that couples found closeness in talking about daily events and that men and women talked differently. Women used more emotional words when they spoke, they also had a greater need and desire for love talk than men did, and women tended to articulate their emotional experience of shared activities more than men did. Women, in general, were verbally more expressive regarding a wider range of emotions and emotional experiences.

The fourth theme - care and concern - was found to be inextricably connected to gendered behaviour, which is shaped by gendered social scripts and/or socialisation. The findings suggested that men and women expressed and experienced care and concern in terms of gender roles. This means that the way men and women experienced care and concern is in the way their partner fulfils his/her role as a man or a woman, according to the norms and values that s/he learnt from the family and community. Women expressed care and concern when they cooked their partner's favourite meal, washed and ironed, and generally cared for the home, while men expressed care and concern by doing chores around the house, buying gifts, and by working and providing for their female partner and children.

The fifth theme highlighted how alcohol disrupts closeness. The impact of alcohol on relationships dominated female accounts, and it was found that most partners, both males and females in this study, reported that it was mainly men in the community who abused alcohol. Men reported that they felt depressed about not being able to provide and this led some of them to drinking. For some couples, the men's drinking behaviour was linked to physical and psychological abuse of women.

The sixth theme focussed on the family of origin and participants' constructions and experiences of intimacy. Both male and female participants' accounts indicated that they were taught predominantly by their mothers to perform stereotypical gender roles in their future relationships. Mothers were the moral compass in the house. Absent fathers were very prevalent in this community, and even when fathers were present, they did not engage much with their children on an emotional level. The caring and nurturing of the children were mainly the role of women. Participants' expectations of their partners also seemed to be influenced by what they were taught and had observed in their own family home while they were growing up.

The seventh theme revealed that intimacy is constructed and experienced in line with the community values, beliefs and norms participants were taught or observed. These seven themes highlighted some critical issues, which will be discussed further in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In the previous chapter, I presented the themes that best encapsulate my participants' constructions and experiences of intimacy. In this chapter, I firstly present a critical discussion of my findings. Secondly, I offer implications and recommendations for future research, and finally, the strengths and limitations of the present study are highlighted.

#### **7.1 A Critical Discussion of the Findings of this Study**

In this section I discuss how (i) my participants' intimacy constructions and experiences fit with current theoretical conceptualisations of intimacy; (ii) the intimacy experiences and constructions of my low-income, Coloured participants seemed to be inextricably linked to gender ideologies; (iii) and how these roles are maintained by their specific socio-economic context.

##### **7.1.1 Participants' experience of intimacy and current conceptualisations of intimacy**

In the first chapters of this dissertation, I highlighted the social constructionist notion that constructions and experiences of intimacy are shaped by social context. I also emphasised that current definitions of intimacy are based on research conducted with mostly middle class, White participants living in Western, developed countries. Prager and Roberts' (2004) conceptualisation is one of the prominent definitions that emphasises the interpersonal and interactional nature of intimacy. Below, I explore how my South African, Coloured, low-income participants' understanding and experience of intimacy compares with mainstream intimacy definitions such as the one developed by Prager and Roberts (2004).

As explained in chapter 2, Prager and Roberts' (2004) conceptualisation differentiates between intimate interactions/interactional intimacy, and intimate relationships/relational intimacy. My participants' intimacy accounts indicate that their intimacy experiences correspond with Prager and Roberts' (2004) definitions of intimate interactions and intimate relationships. Firstly, according to their reports, they met Prager and Roberts' (2004) conditions for intimate interactions as they engaged in self-revealing behaviours, specifically non-verbal self-revealing behaviours such as physical touch and sexual activities. Those couples who indicated that they felt close to their partners also expressed positive regard for their partner. These couples described incidences of positive involvement through verbal and non-verbal means. They also appeared to have shared understandings of their partners' selves (Prager & Roberts, 2004). Their accounts indicated that they knew and understood certain aspects of each other's inner self such as, for example, the likes and dislikes of their partner and the kind of gifts that their partners would find meaningful and special. Their accounts about their interactions also suggested that their knowledge and understanding of each other informed and deepened their successive interactions. For example, husbands or partners knew that their female partners appreciated help in the house, and they would therefore try to provide this assistance. In the same way, women knew their partners appreciated to have their favourite dish prepared for them and would do so.

My participating couples further qualified as having intimate relationships according to Prager and Robert's (2004) definition. Most couples were together for more than two years and they reported having numerous rewarding intimate interactions, such as joking and laughing with each other, fetching wood together, cleaning the house together, praying together, visiting family and friends together or being sexually intimate. However, Prager and Roberts' (2004) point out that this is only the start of defining relational intimacy, and that the quality and degree of relational intimacy varies due to the extensiveness of intimate relating and the accuracy of the accumulating shared personal understandings. Even though many of my participating couples engaged in various intimate interactions that qualified their relationship as intimate, some men and women indicated that alcohol abuse often disrupted their closeness. It was especially women who highlighted that men's alcohol abuse had a negative impact on their relationship, that it led to conflict and sometimes even physical abuse. For many women, men's alcohol abuse affected the quality and degree of their closeness in the relationship, while men minimised or negated the negative effects of their alcohol

abuse on the relationship. Women seemed to separate the attentive and caring side and the alcohol abusing side of their partners in order to maintain a positive relationship construction.

As discussed in previous chapters, research in the area of intimacy has been dominated by North American definitions and typologies of intimacy that has placed a strong emphasis on self-disclosure, and specifically verbal self-disclosure, as a pathway to intimacy (Hook et al., 2003; Laurenceau & Kleinman, 2005; Prager, 1995). This research is also based on the assumption that mutual self-disclosure is the foundation for intimacy (Jamieson, 1999). However, verbal self-disclosure did not feature prominently in my participants' narratives, and some men struggled to articulate their emotions, a phenomenon which is termed alexithymia (Karakis & Levant 2012; Levant, et al., 2006). Alexithymia very likely restricts mutual self-disclosure, and it could limit mutual self-disclosure as a main pathway for intimacy for those couples in which one or both partners find it difficult to articulate their feelings.

The couples in my study mainly talked about experiencing closeness in sharing in practical and tangible ways. This concurs with arguments that intimacy constructions and practices may vary, and that verbal self-disclosure is not necessarily a pivotal feature in intimacy constructions across different social settings (Adams et al., 2004). On investigation of couples in West African settings, Adams et al. (2004), found that love and care is expressed through actions or cheerful relational obligations rather than verbal self-disclosure. According to Laurenceau et al. (2004) the lion's share of intimacy literature focuses on individualistic Western partner relationships, even though two thirds of the world's population live in collectivist societies where partners focus more on the other person's needs, and feelings of intimacy may be better predicted by partners' perception that they are correctly fulfilling their role in the relationship.

### 7.1.2 Gender and intimacy constructions

As already mentioned in chapter 6, gendered ideas of intimacy were pertinent in male and female participants' accounts of their expression and experiences of intimacy. This is not a novel finding. In other South African Black and Coloured, American Black urban and West African populations groups it was also found that gender roles play an important part in how men and women relate to each other in intimate relationships (Adams et al., 2004; Strebel et al., 2006). This pervasiveness of gender seems to be prominent in both low and middle-income communities. For example, Harvey (2009) found that African American middleclass men and women express love along gendered lines. Both men and women in this sample showed love by doing what they thought a man or woman should do to please his/her partner. For example, men felt they needed to provide, and did the laborious work around the house to show their love, while women expressed love through cooking and cleaning. In this study and in other research it was found that through socialisation it is inculcated in women to care for her husband and children, while men are to be the providers, the head of the home, and the decision makers (Wildschut, 2005).

Jamieson's (1999) and Martin's (2013) argument regarding intimacy and inequality in gendered relationships is also relevant here. Jamieson (1999) cautions against an uncritical acceptance of couples' accounts of intimacy, and argues that gendered roles are infiltrated with gender inequalities that prevail in society. Jamieson (1999) and Martin (2013) argue that there are inequalities in many intimate relationships that are not acknowledged or addressed. Couples carefully construct ideas about each other as good and mutually caring partners, despite the unequal sacrifices they make for their common good (Jamieson, 1999). Similarly, it has been noted from my participants' contextual and biographical data (see 5.4) that certain inequalities exist within the relationships of my participant couples (e.g. men earn more money than women, men are the head of the home, women have less opportunities to work and are financially dependent on men). This relates to what Connell (2005) terms hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity provides an understanding of gendered power and a recognition of the hierarchical relations that exists between men and women. According to Hearn (2004), it is difficult to avoid the fact that in most societies, and certainly those of Western, "advanced" capitalism, men are economically dominant in most spheres of life,



especially in business and the work place, which in turns uphold and promote hegemonic masculinity,- a system that disempowers and disadvantages women. Similarly, hegemonic masculinity seems to be prevalent in my research community as men have better access to work opportunities and have more economic power than women .Women on the other hand, seems to take the leadership role in terms of teaching their children morals in the home.

Importantly, my study emphasises that understanding power in any particular intimate relationship must attend to how the greater societal context informs norms, gendered roles, personal beliefs, and expectations regarding relationship responsibility (Knudson-Martin & Huenergardt, 2010; Martin, 2013). Martin argues that gender inequality is still pervasive in many heterosexual relationships today (Martin, 2013). South African and international research has found that many heterosexual couples continue to organise and arrange their relationships around a gender legacy of invisible male power (Knudson-Martin & Mahoney, 2005; Martin, 2013; Shefer et al., 2004). As shown in my findings, male and female partners indicated that genderised roles and responsibilities in the home entailed men performing chores outside the house and women being responsible for cooking, cleaning and daily care-taking of the family. Women, however, tended to prioritise and accommodate their male partners more often than the men did. This coincides with Shefer and Foster (2001) who postulate that feminist analyses of gender power inequalities have exposed heterosexuality as a pivotal place for the reproduction of patriarchy, and in which women's lack of negotiation and men's dominance is highlighted.

My study indicates that couples' power dynamics and inequalities in the relationship were complicated by the contradictory and multiple societal discourses which reinforce gender stereotypes and patriarchy on the one hand, and communicate expectations of relational equality on the other (Knudson-Martin & Huenergardt, 2010; Martin, 2013). Despite the predominance of unequal notions of gender amongst my participants, I also noticed contestations. Some of the participants in my study seemed to challenge stereotypical gender dynamics and demonstrated relatively equal accommodation, attention to, and status in their relationships. This is evident through shared household activities and partners actively helping each other in a more equal

relationship. This in itself is a deviation from the normative hegemonic masculinity ideology that suggests that men have more power and control in the relationship than women.

### **7.1.3 Resistance to traditional constructions**

I have foregrounded the constructions of intimacy and its enmeshment with popular and hegemonic gendered views. However, I also identified instances when alternative discourses surfaced. These discourses challenge hegemonic ideas and offer glimpses of men and women who questioned gendered norms and seemed to engage with each other as equal partners.

Both men and women contested dominant discourses of heterosexuality. For example, some younger women departed from the dominant notion that men should initiate sex. These younger women's sexual interactions with men were also not primarily focused on responding to men's sexual needs but on fulfilling their own needs and desires. Furthermore, some of the women were also able to talk easily and openly about the joy and pleasure they found in sex. These contestations contrast with prior South African research that has tended to highlight women's sexual disempowerment and lack of pleasure discourses (Shefer & Foster, 2001).

Contrary to popular norms and discourses of male heterosexuality in which sexual pursuit, frequency and performance are considered the ultimate goal of male sexuality, most of my male participants indicated that they were monogamous and faithful to one partner. Some of the men also said that they strongly disapproved of the tendency of men in their community to commit infidelity. Infidelity was deemed "dirty" behaviour. Other men also argued that women should be treated with respect and not as a sexual object. Thus, not all men perceived, or at least professed not to do so, in pursuit of sex and multiple women as part of their manhood or masculinity. Some of the men in my sample also highlighted the enjoyment, pleasure and intimate aspect of sex. It can be argued that these men were resisting dominant views of male sexuality which hold that young men's primary purpose in heterosexual intercourse is to orgasm and to prove their manhood. Most of my

male participants highlighted the pleasure, excitement, enjoyment, and intimacy associated with sex with their female partners.

Some men and women were aware of the inequalities and double standards that were prevalent in this community, whereby men can drink and have sex as they choose, while women were frowned upon if they drank excessively or had other partners. The participants reported that domestic violence was very much part of this community and their past, where they witnessed their fathers beat up their mothers. Contrary to what happened in the community and in their past, most men also did not believe in violence against women as noted in much other South African research (Abrahams, 2002; Abrahams et al., 2004; Dunkle et al., 2004; Jewkes et al., 2003). The men in my study did not seem to hold to the patriarchal view that men have the right to abuse, and thus control, women.

Despite the incidences of contestations of hegemonic masculinity, I did not detect an active or conscious awareness of resisting learned gender roles. Many couples did not seem to consider normative gender roles as problematic, limited or limiting, nor did they indicate alternative gender ideas. This could contribute to the maintenance of hegemonic masculinity within poorer communities (Salo, 2003). A possible explanation for why most partners did not consider gender roles as limiting is posed by Weaver (2011) who argues that poverty and low education levels constrain people's access to alternative gender perspectives. Similarly, Harrison (2008) argues that higher socio-economic contexts enable more frequent interactions outside communities, and exposure to alternative gender roles, whereas inhabitants of low-income communities are less likely to be exposed to a variety of influences. It may limit low-income people's exploration of other experiences and ways of living, and invariably they conform to traditional gender and social roles. The same very likely holds true for my low-income research participants. Furthermore, Weaver (2011) posits the dilemma of low-income African-American mothers and grandmothers who unwittingly contribute to women being seen as the ever-present nurturer, carer, financial backbone, moral and religious guide, and motivator. According to Weaver (2011), such gender roles, carved out for women by their mothers and grandmothers, make it hard for a new generation of women to escape the gender role overload. Furphy (2011) argues that such acceptance of traditional gender

and social roles facilitates the reproduction of the same gender ideas in a next generation. Martin (2013) adds to this argument by stating that societal-based norms surrounding gendered power appear so natural that they may be invisible and taken for granted.

My participants' accounts indicated that the Christian religious education and beliefs that they received shaped their gendered experiences and practices of intimacy. Shefer et al. (2008) also found that gendered Christian views were predominant in economically disadvantaged and historically disenfranchised Western Cape communities. Such communities upheld traditional gender roles, which were supported by the church (Shefer et al., 2008). These strong church influences that maintain traditional norms may make it difficult for individual men and women to see and to challenge dominant and prevailing gendered beliefs and attitudes (Van Der Watt, 2007). It must also be noted that most of the church leaders in my participants' community appeared to be males who reinforced the idea that males were the head of the house and that they must be respected and honoured. Such reinforcements perpetuate hegemonic masculinity from a religious perspective, and in turn impact on heterosexual relationships.

Besides the possible negative impact of Christian traditional gender ideas, my participants themselves felt that their religious beliefs and practices facilitated intimate experiences. Furthermore, Christian beliefs encouraged partners to be caring towards each other. For example, the more religious male partners in my study did not abuse alcohol nor physically abused their partners. Couples who shared greater spiritual intimacy also indicated that they had stable and caring relationships. This coincides with findings from Marks et al. (2012) who found a positive relationship between shared religious activities and the intimate relationships of African-American couples and families. Similarly, Engelbrecht (2009) found higher levels of marital satisfaction amongst participants who shared religious activities among participants drawn from the same community.

## 7.2 Implications and Recommendations

Using a qualitative method of analysis, and in accordance with the goals of the study, the present research presents my understanding of the lived experience and expression of intimacy among Coloured, low-income heterosexual couples. In so doing, the research makes a contribution to the knowledge base of adult intimacy within a low-income, South African context.

An important finding was that couples did not emphasise verbal self-disclosure in their accounts of how they experienced intimacy as studies conducted in North-American settings seem to indicate (Hook et al., 2003; Laurenceau & Kleinman, 2005). Marriage counsellors and therapists should therefore be mindful not to impose North-American definitions of intimacy on couples, and researchers should expand their definitions of intimacy. They need to be cognisant of the differences in cultural background, race, and socio-economic status that may shape the construction of intimacy in different contexts.

My study also highlights the continued inequalities between men and women in this rural, low-income community, which may result in women being more vulnerable in relationships. Some male and female participants were aware of the inequalities between men and women, but they did not actively resist it. Such a lack of resistance makes it likely that these inequalities will be communally perpetuated and transferred to the next generation as the acceptable community norm. Women will therefore continue to be limited in their ability to effectively voice their needs and desires in intimate heterosexual relationships. .

Social constructionism emphasises an understanding of the subject's position in its social context. In the social context of Vlotenberg semi-rural community, most men and women in this study highlighted throughout their narratives traditional perspectives of what constitutes masculinity and femininity. However, some men and women also resisted these ideas. Thus, men and women are also constructing alternative versions of what constitutes a masculine and feminine sexuality. It can

therefore be argued that traditional perspectives of what constitutes a heterosexual masculinity and femininity should not be readily assumed, as such assumptions no longer shed light on the changes that are happening within communities, and it sustain traditional patriarchal heterosexual assumptions.

Jamieson (1999) and Lips (2006) argue that gender inequality in other life spheres such as work, should be addressed in order to combat gender inequality in intimate relationships. This seems pertinent for the women in my study, as they were economically disadvantaged by earning less money than men, and mostly occupying part-time employment positions, while men were in full-time employment. It is therefore important to provide economic empowerment opportunities to these women by promoting full-time employment and equal pay for women. Barry (2005) and Lips (2006) argue that a strong stance should be taken to promote gender equality in the work place, government and many other areas to bring us closer to gender equality in heterosexual relationships.

The Gender Equality Bill that has been implemented by the South African government since 1996. However, many businesses have not taken the matter of gender transformation seriously and the gender gap in businesses and government persists (Goko, 2013). For this reason the South African government is considering tougher laws to enforce gender transformation compliance in private and public sectors as early as 2015 (Goko, 2013). In addition, the Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill was presented in parliament in August of 2013 (Goko, 2013). Quoting the Minister of Women, Children and People with Disabilities, Lulu Xingwana, Lulekhani Magubane (2013) agrees that South Africa needs the Women Empowerment and Equality Bill to lash the private sector into compliance when it comes to gender equality and women empowerment. The Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill will allow the state to fine and/or to imprison executive heads who contravene the acts (Goko, 2013). Hopefully the strict enforcement, monitoring and evaluation of the new Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill will speed up the process of reaching gender equality in business, including farming, and government (Goko, 2013).

It is without doubt that the legacy of apartheid poverty, gender inequality, and the burden of HIV/AIDS and violence-related mortality may negatively affect the intimate life of couples (Ratele, et al., 2012). However, as Ratele (2007) notes, relational research is also needed on how couples in impoverished and oppressed communities manage to create positive intimacy experiences. In the context of dominant discourses around intimacy, this qualitative study was aimed at exploring Coloured heterosexual men's and women's accounts of experiencing intimacy. The focus was on acknowledging a broad range of experiences – including positive ways these couples experience intimacy. The study illustrated that couples' experience of intimacy is intertwined with their socio-economic, political and cultural context. I have suggested that intimacy is shaped by dominant cultural understandings of what it means to be a male of a female intimate partner in a poor semi-rural community in South Africa.

Another important implication of my research is related to my findings regarding alcohol abuse. According to my participants, it was mainly men who abused alcohol in this community. Domestic violence, and the physical and psychological abuse of women, was found to be related to alcohol abuse for some couples. This suggest that a partner often needs as much treatment as the abuser of alcohol, as alcohol can become the central focus in many families with an alcoholic individual, and the intimate relations can often revolve around this focus (Saatcioglu et al., 2006). For this reason, Stanley (2012) suggested that couple based interventions could enable partners in alcohol complicated relationships, that are often characterized by violence, to engage in measures and programmes to better understand and deal with the violence in their marital relationships. However, according to Parry (2005), the South Africa government's plan to reduce tertiary care services while simultaneously increasing primary care services to patients with alcohol problems has not occurred. Services remain insufficient to meet the demand and private treatment services both licensed and unlicensed, are not widely accessible to the poor. Parry (2005) advocates for more emphasis to be given to facilitating policy implementation, including making the necessary resources available, ensuring effective leadership and speeding up the pace of implementation. Parry (2005) suggests that priority should be given to implementing brief interventions and other forms of treatment for high-risk and hazardous drinkers.

In the light of the embeddedness of alcohol use in the research community, the provision of accessible treatment programmes is only part of the solution. The community's attitudes towards alcohol abuse should also be addressed - especially perceptions regarding men's abuse of alcohol. Most of my male participants seemed quite cavalier about their drinking. They certainly did not mention it as a problem, but saw it as an intrinsic and normal part of their lives. This poses a problem for interventions, because many men do not see the need for treatment or rehabilitation.

In concurrence with other research (e.g. Abrahams et al., 2006), it is therefore recommended that further research be conducted to explore the dynamics underlying men's abuse of alcohol. Barry (2005) notes that since much of the South African research conducted on alcohol in the past has been epidemiological rather than intervention-oriented, increased funding is necessary for treatment and prevention-focused research projects and also for monitoring and evaluation of such interventions.

Community members' access to informal drinking places such as local shebeens which contribute to the alcohol abuse, should also be considered. Parry (2005) suggests that a coherent liquor outlet policy and counter-advertising in these communities could be a possible solution for excessive drinking. Restrictions should be placed on the liquor outlets of this community and the implementation of counter advertising should target young men in this community to break the pattern of alcohol abuse. According to Barry (2005), the Department of Health's Food-Based Dietary Guidelines is set to promote sensible drinking and has drafted regulations to restrict alcohol advertisements and to introduce warning labels on containers on the harmful effects of alcohol. Such interventions may be helpful in deterring young people in this community from excessive drinking.

Key stakeholders such as farm owners and religious and community leaders also need to initiate and/or support measures to curb alcohol abuse on farms. According to Setlalentoe et al. (2010), moderate alcohol consumption is associated with significant health benefits; however, the disruptions caused by alcohol abuse on family life are overwhelming. This presents a dilemma of



whether to encourage moderate consumption of alcohol or to promote total abstinence (Setlalento et al., 2010). In an area where alcohol is easily accessible, abstinence seems impossible; therefore, it is recommended that people in this farming community should be taught how to enjoy moderate alcohol intake as a health benefit by farm owners and community leaders.

My study also indicates that women were more articulate and comfortable regarding the expression of emotional experiences. As suggested by Levant (2011), my male participants' apparent normative male alexithymia may be a result of these men's restricted and traditional gender socialisation. Although neither men nor women identified this phenomenon as problematic, the ability to recognise, experience and express emotions is important for emotional regulation and ultimately for individual mental health (Cassidy, 2008). It therefore points to the necessity of addressing traditional gender roles and socialisation in this community so that men may be taught and encouraged to acquire key emotional skills.

This study additionally sheds light on the dual influence of religion. On the one hand Christian principles seem to aid intimacy as it encouraged partners to express respect, love, and care towards each other. There also seemed to be an absence of alcohol abuse and violence in couple relationships where both partners aspired towards implementing Christian principles. Christian counselling programmes that can promote such values, and which can counteract alcohol abuse and violence in relationships can make a positive contribution in alcohol ridden communities. However, traditional gender roles appeared to be taught and reinforced by prevailing religious ideas and religious leaders in this community. In doing so, religious leaders contributed to gender inequalities and patriarchal attitudes and practices in their communities. These leaders therefore have to be challenged to reflect on and review their own gender role constructions so that they are enabled to initiate and encourage alternative gender roles that would lead to more equal heterosexual relationships in this community. Established religious and state institutions could assist in providing religious leaders with information and training on how they could conduct marital intervention programmes and counselling to promote equality and intimacy in such genderised communities.

Finally, it is clear that this qualitative study about intimacy has pinpointed some of the significant problems hindering intimacy in this community, and the pervasive ideas and ideologies that continue to influence the ways in which people practice intimacy. The findings indicate that research should be conducted that will increase our knowledge of the influence of contextual factors on intimacy constructions and experiences. In particular, future studies should investigate, in an in-depth manner, the cultural and social influences on couples living in low-income communities. This will assist in providing knowledge about their specific needs around intimacy, which could be used in efforts to enhance psycho-social wellbeing in such communities. In this respect, it is clear that particular emphasis needs to be placed on counselling that is gender sensitive and framed by a progressive understanding of socio-economic and social context. In addition, psychologists and therapists require support and further training in order to be equipped to counsel on issues of intimacy. Such a context also opens the way for a proliferation of challenges and interventions in the realm of gender and intimacy more broadly.

### **7.3 Strengths and Limitations of the Present Study**

Western studies were mostly conducted in North America and included mainly White, middle-class participants. The current study aimed to explore the expression and experience of intimacy in a specific context in South Africa, using low-income, Coloured, semi-rural participants, and thus contributed to a local knowledge base.

As indicated in chapter 3, South African studies published over the last 15 years on intimacy focussed mainly on negative aspects such as HIV/Aids, inter-partner violence and gender inequality when researching Black or Coloured intimate life. In contrast to such research, this study investigated positive aspects of relationships of impoverished Coloured couples. The results revealed that couples' experience of intimacy is closely intertwined with their socio-economic, political and cultural context. This study further suggests that intimacy is shaped by dominant cultural understandings of what it meant to be a male or female intimate partner in poor, semi-rural communities in South Africa. Intimacy tends to exist along strong gendered lines. This study

generated context-specific knowledge regarding intimate, long-term, heterosexual relationships in one low-income, farm worker community.

The study included both married and cohabiting couples. This acknowledged the changing nature and diversity of relationship forms in the South African context, and allowed the sample group to be more representative of the target population. The current study assessed couples rather than individuals, in order to gain insight into both partners' perspectives and experiences in the relationship, as suggested by Laurenceau & Kleinman (2005).

However, several limitations were identified: firstly, this study was conducted within a particular community and it is thus limited to offering insight into how couples experience and express intimacy within this specific context. The fact that all participants were low-income heterosexual Coloured men and women and that they were all identified as Christian, limits the extent to which the findings of this study could be generalised to other income groups, lesbian or gay couples, or other racial and religious groups. Research should be expanded to include participants from different communities, races, religions, cultures, sexual orientations, gender identities, different socio-economic groups, and couples in different types of relationships (i.e. less than two years) to compare differences and similarities across the groups. Comparative studies are needed.

Secondly, the research revealed that when comparing these couples' experience of intimacy to Prager and Roberts (2004) description of intimacy, couples seems to perceive themselves to be in an intimate relationship. Even though many couples engaged in various intimate interactions that qualified their relationship as intimate, the quality and degree of relational intimacy was not particularly clear from the interviews, and this leaves a gap in the literature that can be addressed in future research.

Finally, another limitation is that the results may not reflect the experiences of all couples in this community, but those who felt that they had satisfactory relationships. Research has shown that happier couples tend to volunteer to participate in relationship questionnaires and this could give a biased perspective (Cheung & Hudson, 1982). It is also likely that participants may have presented

themselves and their relationships more positively, especially in conversation with an academic middle-class interviewer.

#### **7.4 Conclusion**

This study aimed to generate community-specific knowledge about intimacy. Specifically, it explored understandings, expressions and experiences of intimacy in adult couples in committed relationships who live in one low-income, semi-rural, Western Cape Coloured community. Closeness was expressed through sharing in practical and tangible ways. Gender was pertinent to these couples' experiences and gender roles were fundamental to how they did intimacy. Most couples did not seem to consider these gender roles as problematic, limited or limiting, nor did they indicate alternative gender ideas, but there were instances of contestation of hegemonic gendered norms, which indicated that masculinity and femininity were continually created and modified in this community. Religion and community influences played an important role in the constructions of the relationship and the maintenance of hegemonic masculinity. In conclusion, implications for policy and practice in terms of gender inequality and alcohol abuse were highlighted.

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## **Appendix A: Consent Form**

### **Couple's Expression of Intimacy in Intimate Relationships:**

I am currently a doctoral student in the Psychology Department at the University of Stellenbosch. In order to obtain this degree, I will do research that involves investigating how men and women in a Coloured rural community experience and express intimacy in long-term, committed relationships.

#### **1. Aim:**

This study aims to investigate how couples express and experience intimacy in their relationships. I aim to interview couples over a period of two years. This research involves questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaires will ask questions regarding your intimate relationship. Participation in this project is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time. All information will be considered strictly confidential.

#### **2. The procedure is two-fold and will be as follows:**

##### **a. Questionnaires:**

Firstly, you will be asked different questions about your background and your intimate relationship. The questionnaires will be administered by a research assistant or the principal investigator.

b. Interview:

Secondly, you will be asked a series of questions during an interview session to explore your social setting and how social influences or home settings affect intimacy in your relationship. This is an exploratory research project to inform professionals about the meaning different people attach to intimacy and will contribute to further couple enrichment programmes or marital therapy.

3. Risks:

Possible risks of this study are:

It is possible that you may experience some discomfort or that problematic issues may come up for you as a result of your participation in this research. To address this possibility, all participants will be provided with the contact information of free counselling services. If you therefore need assistance with painful or problematic issues, please use this contact number.

4. Scientific Merit:

This research will pay special attention to historically neglected populations and age groups to see how couples in under-researched communities express and experience intimacy in their relationship. This research could add to the limited research of this nature in different population groups in South Africa. Furthermore, this kind of research could help inform clinicians about the meaning that different groups attach to intimacy and how they express that understanding of intimacy.

A. Consent form:

Couple's expression of intimacy in one low-income community:

I, the undersigned ..... have read and understood the attached information sheet describing the study at the Department of Psychology of the University of Stellenbosch, and consent to the study of intimacy in intimate relationships.

I understand that the results will be used for research purposes and that all information will be treated as strictly confidential.

I have been informed that I may refuse to take part in this research project (also that I may withdraw from the study at any time) and that such refusal or withdrawal will not impact negatively on me. I also understand that the researcher may withdraw me from this research project if he/ she deems it to be in my interest.

I understand that my participation in this research project involves no additional costs to myself. **I hereby willingly agree** to my participation in the abovementioned project.

Signed / confirmed at ..... on ...../...../20.....

.....

.....

Signature or initials: .....

B. Declaration by researcher or representative of researcher:

I, ....., declare that:

1. The information contained in this document has been explained to the participant Mr/Ms.....
2. The participant has been invited to ask me questions about anything that may be unclear about this study.
3. That this conversation took place in English or Afrikaans, and that an interpreter was not used/ that this conversation was interpreted in (.....) by Dr/Mr/Ms.....

Signed at ..... on ...../...../20.....

.....

Researcher / representative of researcher

Witness



Important information:

Dear Participant

Thank you for your participation in this research study. In the event of you requiring any further information about this study, or in the event of any situation arising as a direct result of this study, such as sudden onset of stress or affective trauma, please call Arlene Adams at telephone number **(0825656283) or Life Line on 086 132 2322021 461 1111.**

## **Appendix B: Biographical and Relationship Questionnaire**

Opname oor verhoudings vertroulik:

Datum: \_\_\_\_\_

Paartjie kode: \_\_\_\_\_ Deelnemer kode: \_\_\_\_\_

Is jy nou in 'n hegte verhouding met iemand?

Ja \_\_\_\_\_ (Gaan voort met vrae)

Nee \_\_\_\_\_ (Eindig alle vraagstelling)

My naam is \_\_\_\_\_ en ek werk by die Universiteit Stellenbosch. Ek wil jou graag 'n paar vrae oor jou verhoudings vra. Onthou asseblief: As daar enige vrae is wat jou ongemaklik laat voel, hoef jy dit nie te beantwoord nie. Jy kan enige tyd ook vir my sê as jy die onderhoud wil stop.

Baie dankie dat jy ingestem het om aan hierdie studie deel te neem.

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Afdeling A:

Kliënt se voorletters: \_\_\_\_\_

1) Geslag:     ☐     Manlik            ☐     Vroulik

Geboortedatum: (DD/MM/JJJJ) \_\_\_\_\_

2) Ouderdom: \_\_\_\_\_

3) Watter taal praat jy by die huis?

☐     Afrikaans

☐     Engels

☐     Xhosa

☐     Ander (spesifiseer asb.) \_\_\_\_\_

4) Wat is die hoogste vlak van onderrig wat jy voltooi het? (Kies een)

Geen skoolopleiding nie	
Graad 1/Sub A	
Graad 2/Sub B	
Graad 3/Standerd 1	
Graad 4/Standerd 2	
Graad 5/Standerd 3	
Graad 6/Standerd 4	
Graad 7/Standerd 5	
Graad 8/Standerd 6/Klas 1	
Graad 9/Standerd 7/Klas 2	
Graad 10/Standerd 8/Klas 3/NTS I	
Graad 11/Standerd 9/Klas 4/NTS II	
Graad 12/Standerd 10/Klas 5/Matriek/NTS III	
Sertifikaat met minder as graad 12	
Diploma met minder as graad 12	
Sertifikaat met graad 12	
Diploma met graad 12	

BA-graad (Baccalaureus-graad)	
BA-graad en diploma	
Honneursgraad	
Hoër graad (meesters- of doktersgraad)	

5) Bly jy in Longlands?

Ja ☐ Nee ☐

6) Is jy lid van 'n mediese fonds?

Ja ☐ Nee ☐

7) Behoort jy aan 'n geloof?

Ja ☐ Nee ☐

8) Indien **JA**, aan watter geloof behoort jy? \_\_\_\_\_

9) Behoort jou maat aan 'n geloof?

Ja ☐ Nee ☐

10) Indien **JA**, aan watter geloof behoort jou maat? \_\_\_\_\_

**11)** Hoeveel keer per week neem jy deel aan byeenkomste by die kerk? \_\_\_\_\_

[Fieldworker to calculate church attendance for month i.e. times per month (multiply weekly number by 4) Number of times participant attends church a month\_\_\_\_\_]

**12)** Hoeveel keer per week neem jou maat deel aan byeenkomste by die kerk?\_\_\_\_\_

[Fieldworker to calculate church attendance for month i.e. times per month (multiply weekly number by 4) Number of times participant's partner attends church a month\_\_\_\_\_]

**13)** Hoeveel keer per week neem jy en jou maat saam deel aan byeenkomste by die kerk? \_\_\_\_\_

[Fieldworker to calculate church attendance for month i.e. times per month (multiply weekly number by 4) Number of times a month participant and his/ her partner attend church together\_\_\_\_\_]

**14)** In Suid-Afrika dink mense dikwels aan hulself in terme van ras. Hoe dink jy oor jouself in terme van ras? OF. Aan watter rassegroep dink jy behoort jy?

- ☐ Swart
- ☐ Bruin
- ☐ Indiër
- ☐ Wit
- ☐ Ander (spesifiseer asb.) \_\_\_\_\_

**15)** Aan watter rassegroep behoort jou maat?

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- ☐ Swart
- ☐ Bruin
- ☐ Indiër
- ☐ Wit
- ☐ Ander (spesifiseer asb.) \_\_\_\_\_

**16)** In watter soort huis leef jy?

- ☐ baksteenhuis op 'n aparte standplaas
- ☐ huis/struktuur in agterplaas
- ☐ informele hut/blyplek in agterplaas
- ☐ informele hut/blyplek NIE in agterplaas NIE
- ☐ ander (spesifiseer asb.) \_\_\_\_\_

17) Wie se huis is dit?

- ☐ joune
- ☐ huweliksmaat of *partner*
- ☐ ma of pa
- ☐ ouma of oupa
- ☐ boetie of sussie
- ☐ uitgebreide familie
- ☐ plaaseienaar
- ☐ ander (spesifiseer asb.) \_\_\_\_\_

18) Hoeveel vertrekke is daar in die huis? \_\_\_\_\_

19) Hoeveel slaapkamers is daar in die huis? \_\_\_\_\_

20) Wie slaap saam met jou in 'n kamer?

- ☐ niemand nie
- ☐ huweliksmaat of *partner*
- ☐ kind
- ☐ ma en/of pa
- ☐ ouma en/of oupa
- ☐ boetie en/of sussie



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- ☐ uitgebreide familie
- ☐ ander (spesifiseer asb.) \_\_\_\_\_

**21)** Wie slaap in die nag saam met jou in die bed?

- ☐ niemand nie
- ☐ huweliksmaat of *partner*
- ☐ kind
- ☐ ma en/of pa
- ☐ ouma en/of oupa
- ☐ boetie en/of sussie
- ☐ uitgebreide familie
- ☐ ander (spesifiseer asb.) \_\_\_\_\_

**22)** Is daar 'n badkamer in die huis?

Ja ☐ Nee ☐

**23)** Is daar elektrisiteit in die huis?

Ja ☐ Nee ☐

**24)** Is daar water in die huis?

Ja ☐ Nee ☐

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**25)** Hoe lank bly jy al in Vlottenburg? (**Vul in die aantal jare.**) \_\_\_\_\_

**26)** As Vlottenburg nie jou gewone blyplek is nie, hoekom kom jy hiernatoe (wat is jou rol hier)?

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Inkomste:

**27)** Verdien jy enige geld?

Ja ☐      Nee ☐

[A. As jy tans werk]

**28)** Indien **JA**, omtrent hoeveel uur werk jy per week?

☐ minder as 10

☐ 10 tot 20

☐ 21 tot 30

☐ 31 tot 40

☐ meer as 41

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29) Watter soort werk doen jy? \_\_\_\_\_

30) Hoe dikwels werk jy?

- ☐ volle dag
- ☐ half dag
- ☐ per uur soos werk beskikbaar is
- ☐ seisoenale werk
- ☐ ander (spesifiseer asb.) \_\_\_\_\_

31) Van wanneer af doen jy hierdie werk? \_\_\_\_\_

Hoeveel geld verdien jy per week en per maand? (**Vul altwee in.**)

32) \_\_\_\_\_ per week

33) \_\_\_\_\_ per maand

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**34)** Is daar enige maande in 'n jaar wanneer jy nie geld verdien nie?

Ja ☐ Nee ☐

**35)** Indien **ja**, hoeveel maande in 'n jaar verdien jy nie geld nie? \_\_\_\_\_

**36)** Vir hoeveel persone moet jy sorg (jouself ingesluit)? \_\_\_\_\_

[B. As jy nie tans werk nie]

**37)** As jy **nie werk het nie**, van wanneer af het jy nie werk nie? \_\_\_\_\_

**38)** Is daar enige maande in 'n jaar wanneer jy geld verdien?

Ja ☐ Nee ☐

**39)** Indien **ja**, hoeveel maande in 'n jaar verdien jy geld? \_\_\_\_\_

**40)** Wat was die laaste werk wat jy gehad het? \_\_\_\_\_

[C. Huishouding]

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**41)** Het jy of enige ander persoon in jou huishouding enige ander vorm van inkomste soos 'n toelaag?

Ja ☐      Nee ☐

**42)** Ongeveer hoeveel geld verdien die mense in **jou huishouding altesaam in 'n maand?**

Maandelikse Inkomste: \_\_\_\_\_

(Veldwerker bereken die jaarlikse inkomste vir die huishouding.)

**43)** Jaarlikse Inkomste (huishouding)

- ☐ Geen
- ☐ 1 tot 4 800
- ☐ 4 801 tot 9 600
- ☐ 9 601 tot 19 200
- ☐ 19 201 tot 38 400
- ☐ 38 401 tot 76 800
- ☐ 76 801 tot 153 600
- ☐ 153 601 tot 307 200
- ☐ 307 201 tot 614 400
- ☐ 614 401 tot 1 228 800
- ☐ meer as 1 228 801

Mense het verskillende soorte verhoudings en daar is nie 'n regte of verkeerde manier om verhoudings te 'doen' of te 'hê' nie. Byvoorbeeld, party mense is getroud maar het ook 'n verhouding met iemand anders wat vir hulle net so belangrik is. Party mense kan dalk in 'n verhouding wees met iemand wat dieselfde geslag as hulle is, maar is te skaam om ander daarvan te vertel. Ons wil graag weet hoe mense hulle verhoudings 'doen' en hoe hulle dit ervaar.

**44)** Is jy nou in 'n hegte verhouding met een persoon?

Ja ☐ Nee ☐

**45)** Is jy nou in 'n hegte verhouding met meer as een persoon?

Ja ☐ Nee ☐

**46)** Indien ja, weet al die persone met wie jy verhoudings het van mekaar?

Ja ☐ Nee ☐

**47)** In watter soort verhouding is jy **nou**? (**Kies net een en vul in.**)

[Indien die respondēt huidige in meer as een verhouding is, spesifiseer elke verhoudingstipe]

In 'n verhouding maar bly nie saam nie (sedert \_\_\_\_\_)

Getroud (sedert \_\_\_\_\_)

Getroud, maar bly nie saam nie (b.v. maat bly/ werk in 'n ander dorp)

Bly saam met iemand van dieselfde geslag (sedert \_\_\_\_\_)

Bly saam met iemand van die teenoorgestelde geslag (sedert \_\_\_\_\_)

Vervreem (nog getroud, maar bly nie saam nie) (sedert \_\_\_\_\_)

Geskei (sedert \_\_\_\_\_)

My maat (*partner*) is oorlede (sedert \_\_\_\_\_)

[Beskryf die soort verhouding waarin jy nou is as nie een van dié hierbo op jou van toepassing is nie] \_\_\_\_\_

**48) As jy *getroud is of was*: Hoekom het jy getrou?**

- ☐ godsdienstige redes
- ☐ finansiële redes
- ☐ swangerskap
- ☐ liefde
- ☐ ander (spesifiseer asb.) \_\_\_\_\_

**49) As jy *nie getroud is nie*, om watter rede sal jy wel trou?**

- ☐ godsdienstige redes
- ☐ finansiële redes
- ☐ swangerskap

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☐ liefde

☐ ander (spesifiseer asb.) \_\_\_\_\_

Geskiedenis van verhouding(s)

As jy **geskei** is of jou maat **oorlede** is:

**50)** Hoe lank was jy getroud? \_\_\_\_\_

**51)** Hoeveel keer het jy getrou? \_\_\_\_\_

**52)** Hoe lank was jy elke keer getroud? (Vul 'n antwoord in vir elke huwelik.)

Duur met elke maat (partner)

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

**53)** Hoe lank was jy enkellopend tussen die huwelike? (Vul 'n antwoord in vir elke huwelik.)

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_



**54)** Hoveel verhoudings het jy gehad wat so lank was:

Minder as 1 jaar met 'n maat (partner) \_\_\_\_\_

1-2 jaar met 'n maat (partner) \_\_\_\_\_

2-3 jaar met 'n maat (partner) \_\_\_\_\_

3-5 jaar met 'n maat (partner) \_\_\_\_\_

5-8 jaar met 'n maat (partner) \_\_\_\_\_

meer as 8 jaar met 'n maat (partner) \_\_\_\_\_

**55)** Hoeveel verhoudings het jy tot nou in jou lewe gehad wat jy voel belangrike verhoudings was?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**56)** Saam met hoeveel maats (*partners*) het jy in **dieselfde huis gebly**, \_\_\_\_\_ en vir hoe lank?

Duur met elke maat (partner)

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

57) Hoeveel kinders is daar in die **huishouding**? \_\_\_\_\_

58) Wat is hulle se ouderdomme? \_\_\_\_\_

59) Wie is die ouers van hierdie kinders?

\_\_\_\_\_

[Aantal kinders op wie hierdie opsie van toepassing is]

1. Jy en jou huidige maat

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Jou kind uit 'n vorige verhouding

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Jou huidige maat se kind uit 'n vorige verhouding \_\_\_\_\_

4. Iemand anders se kind \_\_\_\_\_

60) Het jy enige kinders wat nie by jou in dieselfde huis bly nie?

Ja ☐ Nee ☐

61) Indien **ja**, hoeveel? \_\_\_\_\_

62) [As die deelnemer 'n vrou is] Is jy tans swanger?

Ja ☐ Nee ☐

Hoeveel mense altesaam leef en slaap in die huis waar jy bly?

**63)** Totale getal wat in die huis **leef** \_\_\_\_\_

**64)** Totale getal wat in die huis **slaap** \_\_\_\_\_

**65)** Wat is jou verhouding met hierdie mense?

Leef

Slaap

- |           |           |
|-----------|-----------|
| 1. _____  | 1. _____  |
| 2. _____  | 2. _____  |
| 3. _____  | 3. _____  |
| 4. _____  | 4. _____  |
| 5. _____  | 5. _____  |
| 6. _____  | 6. _____  |
| 7. _____  | 7. _____  |
| 8. _____  | 8. _____  |
| 9. _____  | 9. _____  |
| 10. _____ | 10. _____ |

(Veldwerker moet spesifiseer verhouding vir elke person)

66) Wie is die hoof van jou huishouding?

- ☐ jy
- ☐ 'n ander persoon

[Aan Veldwerker: Indien die deelnemer nie die hoof van die huishouding is nie, vra:]

67) Wat is jou verhouding met hierdie persoon? Die persoon is my:

- ☐ huweliksmaat of *partner*
- ☐ ma of pa
- ☐ ouma of oupa
- ☐ boetie of sussie
- ☐ uitgebreide familie
- ☐ ander (spesifiseer asb.) \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C: Semi-Structured Interview

### Semi-struktureerde Onderhoud / Semi-structured Interview

#### Onderhoudsvrae / Interview questions

A. The first part of the interview will be focused on clarifying the terminology used in the interview. We expect that the word ‘intimacy’ is not a word often used in this community and if people do use it, they associate it with sexual intimacy. Very likely the words ‘closeness’ or ‘nabyheid’ will be more familiar, but we do not want to introduce our own term. Therefore, to (i) explore if people introduce the concept or experience of intimacy out of their own accord and to (ii) identify the word that they use for intimacy, respondents will be asked broad exploratory questions, such as:

- i. Vertel my omtrent dit wat vir jou belangrik is in jou verhouding? / Tell me about what is important for you in your relationship?
- ii. Wat van jou verhouding is vir jou goed of lekker? / What about your relationship is good or fun?
- iii. **Hoe is dit vir jou om by jou maat te wees?** / How does it feel to be with/ close to your partner?
- iv. **Wanneer voel dit goed om by jou maat te wees?** / When does it feel good to be with/ close to your partner?
- v. **Wat mis jy in jou verhouding?** / What do you miss in your relationship?
- vi. **Wat is sleg vir jou in jou verhouding?** / What is bad for you in your relationship?

**B.** If the responses to these questions indicate that intimacy or alternative constructs are presented by the respondents, the respondent's own word will be used for the rest of the interview.

- i. **Wat verstaan jy onder die woord 'intimiteit'/ 'intiem' of die respondent se eie term?** / What do you understand under the word 'intimacy'/ 'intimate' or the respondent's own term?
- ii. **Wanneer is jy intiem met jou maat?** / When are you intimate with your partner?
- iii. **Vertel my van hierdie tye wanneer jy intiem met jou maat is.** / Tell me about these occasions of intimacy?
- iv. **Wat omtrent dit voel intiem vir jou?** / What about it feels intimate?
- v. **Voel jy dat jou verhouding intiem genoeg is? Waarom?** / Do you feel that your relationship is intimate enough? Why?
- vi. **Met watter ander mense in jou lewe het jy al intimiteit ervaar? Vertel my hiervan.** / With who else have you ever experienced intimacy? Please tell me about these experiences.
- vii. **Dink jy ander mense se verhoudings met hul maats, is soos joune?** / Do you think that other people's relationship with their partner is like yours?

**C.** The following questions will explore how couples express or show love and care to their partners and how partners respond to it.

- i. **Hoe wys jy vir jou maat dat jy lief is vir hom/ haar?** / How do you show your partner that you love him/ her? /
- ii. **Hoe wys jou maat vir jou dat hy/sy lief is vir jou?** / How does your partner show you that he/ she loves you?

- iii. **Voel jy tevrede oor die manier waarop jou maat sy gevoelens teenoor jou toon? Hoekom voel jy so?** / Do you feel satisfied with the way your partner expresses his/ her feelings towards you? Why do you feel this way?
- iv. **Dink jy jou maat is gelukkig oor die manier waarop jy jou gevoelens toon? Hoe weet jy?** / Do you think your partner is happy with the way you express your feelings towards him/ her? How do you know?

Dankie, dit was die laaste vraag, en dankie dat jy die vrae beantwoord het. / Thank you, that was the last question and thank you for answering these questions.

**Appendix D: Line-by-Line Coding of Interview Answer/ Statement**

## Example 1

R [Researcher]: What did you learn about relationships from your mother?

P [Participant]: What I learned from my mother is that a relationship needs work from both sides. What you put in is what you get out. Long suffering, trust, love and caring for one another help to make a good relationship.

Line-by-line coding	Code	Significant words, ideas, concepts or memos
What I learned from my mother is	Parental influence - mother	Mother is an important figure
that relationships need work from both sides	Equal relationships are constructed by both partners	Social learning - parental influences Women and men play an equal role
What you and he contribute	Reciprocation in relationship important	Reciprocation enhances intimacy Matter of working together



## Line-by-line coding of interview answer/statement

## Example 2

R: How did alcohol affect you in the home?

English translation:

P: You can't do anything. I've always prayed that God would kill the children, or kill the adults or remove the alcohol. What can you do, you forced to do the best you can.

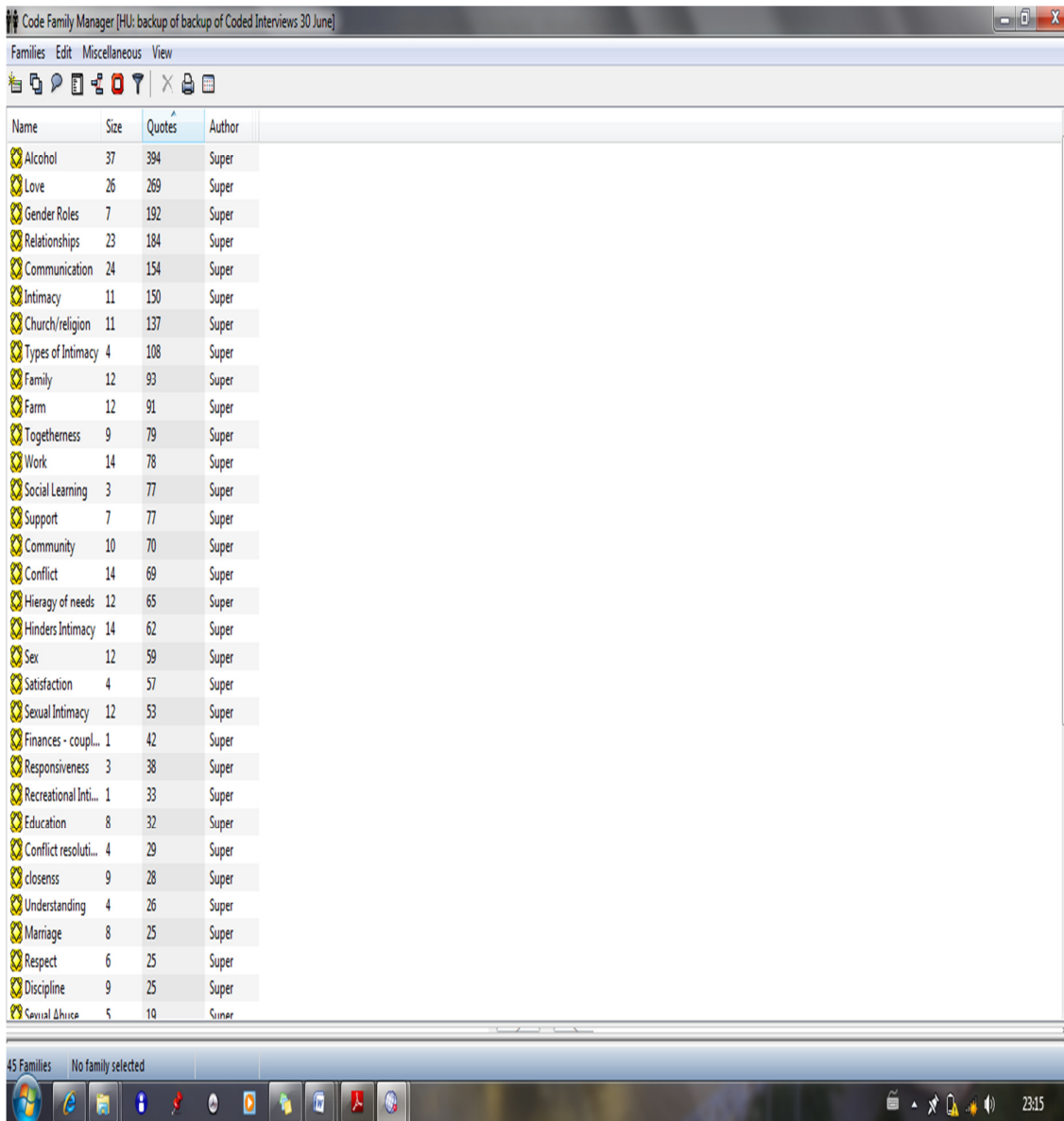
Line-by-line coding	Code	Significant words, ideas, concepts or memos
When my father use to hit my mother when he is drunk, I always prayed that God would rather kill the children	The partner abuse related to alcohol causes feelings of hopelessness  Religion and women	Adverse effect of her life. Desperate thoughts around 'killing' the children.  Pleads with God. Desperate situation  Alcohol causes deep problems for children  Doesn't want to take her own life, but wants God to relieve her of the pain, even death
Or kill the adults	Alcohol - adult drinking  Psychological anguish	Adults cause mental anguish  Crisis state - men's drinking is

	Negative impact of alcohol on family	<p>the cause of women and children feeling hopeless</p> <p>Men's drinking is equated with death. Living in house where men drink drives children to consider death.</p>
Remove the drinking	Drinking causes conflict, psychological stress	<p>Drinking is seen as the cause of the problem. Drinking brings pain</p> <p>Death is the choice if drinking remains</p>

## Appendix E: List of Themes Generated from the Interview Data

Code Family Manager (HU: backup of backup of Coded Interviews 30 June)

Families Edit Miscellaneous View



Name	Size	Quotes	Author
Alcohol	37	394	Super
Love	26	269	Super
Gender Roles	7	192	Super
Relationships	23	184	Super
Communication	24	154	Super
Intimacy	11	150	Super
Church/religion	11	137	Super
Types of Intimacy	4	108	Super
Family	12	93	Super
Farm	12	91	Super
Togetherness	9	79	Super
Work	14	78	Super
Social Learning	3	77	Super
Support	7	77	Super
Community	10	70	Super
Conflict	14	69	Super
Hierarchy of needs	12	65	Super
Hinders Intimacy	14	62	Super
Sex	12	59	Super
Satisfaction	4	57	Super
Sexual Intimacy	12	53	Super
Finances - coupl...	1	42	Super
Responsiveness	3	38	Super
Recreational Inti...	1	33	Super
Education	8	32	Super
Conflict resoluti...	4	29	Super
closenss	9	28	Super
Understanding	4	26	Super
Marriage	8	25	Super
Respect	6	25	Super
Discipline	9	25	Super
Survival Advice	5	10	Super

45 Families No family selected

## **Appendix F: Themes and Subthemes Identified from Codes**

Theme: Togetherness means closeness

Subthemes:

Self-disclosure for women, but shared activities for men

Couples experience different forms of intimacy, togetherness or closeness

Routine activities, such as fetching water and wood, also fall under times of togetherness

Theme: Sexual intimacy

Subthemes:

Sexual activities - and the lack of private space to be sexually intimate

Men use unique jargon to talk about sex

Sex is important for both men and women

Sex important part of intimacy - special time for both males and females

Men feel shy talking about sex; women expressive in descriptions

Sexual intimacy curbed by living conditions

Social activities - family and friends

Other types of closeness:

Subthemes:

Recreational activities - visits, braais, window shopping

Emotional closeness - females enjoy talking to husband

Spiritual activities - unite them in their belief and relationship

More positive - spiritual activities enhance their sense of togetherness - see themselves as complementing each other in the relationship

The way couples do intimate activities also subject to socio-economic conditions and resources

Theme: Acts of care and concern

Subthemes:

Show care by assisting in chores around the house and outside - women do things for men without being prompted

Women show care and concern - cooking a special meal, wash, iron clothing, clean and care for the house and family

Males see housework as women's work, but some men share household duties

Men buy little gifts and women experience gifts as love

Men feel they need to be the providers

Inability to provide leads to feelings of worthlessness

Theme: Alcohol interrupts care and concern

Subthemes:

Community saturated in drink

Men drink with friends - community norm

Causes distance in the relationship

Mainly men who drink

Women tend to drink more ciders than strong alcoholic drinks

Alcohol abuse precedes partner violence

Why women don't leave? Economic, financial, social disempowerment of women

Mental and psychological effect of alcohol abuse on partner

Theme: Origin of gender roles influenced by family and community

Subthemes:

Children were instructed on certain values and actions according to gender roles

Mainly observed physical, spiritual, recreational, emotional intimacy between parents

Mothers: nurturers, teachers, caregivers and moral compass and instruct children on Christian principles

Most fathers absent and not involved in moral instruction of the children in the home

Children were taught gender roles; girls were taught to cook and clean, while boys were taught to do laborious chores outside and around the house.

Earlier teachings influence expectations in current relationships

Economic imbalances

Patriarchal values and gender roles inform the roles partners play in relationships

Different rules for men and women in the community

Women and men expected to perform specific roles

Fulfilling gender roles is equated with love

Couples who are happy tend to share chores more frequently

Gender roles provide a sense of structure for men and women to operate in

Negative side: men have more entitlement and economic power than women

Women - no work, low pay, economic dependency, socially and economically disempowered, financial dependency

Men feel obligated to show love by providing

Emotional impact on men

Feelings of inferiority, lack of self worth

Sense of hopelessness

Theme: Community norms

Subthemes:

Community norm of alcohol abuse

Men drink together in shebeens as a norm

Monetary system around drinking

Different rules for men and women; men have more freedom to drink

Alcohol precedes partner violence

### **Appendix G: Master Themes:**

From the abovementioned themes and subthemes, the following six super-ordinate or master themes were identified:

- i Closeness means being together;
- ii Sexual closeness
- iii Closeness through talking
- iv Expressions and experiences of intimacy/ closeness through acts of care;
- v Alcohol disrupts closeness;
- vi Family of origin and constructions of intimacy; and
- vii Community constructions and norms